

The BUFFALO BILL STORIES

Devoted To Far West Life

BUFFALO BILL'S DEATH TRAP

OR PAWNEE BILL AND THE COMANCHE CAPTIVE

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"BUFFALO BILL"



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The crack of a rifle in the hut reached the ears of the approaching scouts.
At the same instant the Comanche tumbled from the horse,
but the captive was unhurt.

THE BUFFALO BILL



A WEEKLY PUBLICATION STORIES DEVOTED TO BORDER LIFE

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BUFFALO BILL'S DEATH TRAP; Or, PAWNEE BILL AND THE COMANCHE CAPTIVE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE BELEAGUERED CABIN.

The night had been a restless one for both Buffalo Bill and Red Plume, his Pawnee friend, and his partner in many a peril and victory with the "hostiles."

For more than a month a fever of unrest seemed to be sweeping over the various Indian tribes, whether on reservations or off, along the whole frontier line that extended at that time from the Black Hills of the North to the turbid waters of the Rio Grande in the far Southwest.

The ever warlike Sioux seemed to be inspired with a renewed hatred of the paleface interlopers in the vast territories of Dakota and Montana.

The Cheyennes and their kindred tribe, the Arapahoes, were reported as raiding in Wyoming and southward.

In Arizona the Apaches appeared to be trying to exterminate the white settlers throughout the territory.

In northwestern Texas it was the Comanches—those princely horsemen, and, in many respects, the ablest warriors that the Indian race could muster.

For some time the Comanches had been "getting civilized." In their case this did not imply that they were showing their ability to drink as much whisky as the whites, who were held up as examples for them to follow.

As a tribe, the Comanches would not drink liquors of any kind. This made them more careful plotters against their enemies when they started on the warpath.

Then, they were well supplied with firearms of a late pattern, and only a very few of the most famous of the white scouts were better marksmen than they.

These few words of explanation are necessary to show the background of the story we are about to tell. Then, any truthful details about the redskin races are worth knowing.

Cody and the Pawnee chief had had a harassing day of it.

They were told at the start that there were not more than a dozen Comanches in the party which they undertook to run down. But once they got to where they could read the trail with their own eyes, they knew that the number of the enemy had been understated.

Buffalo Bill set the probable number at twenty-five; Red Plume's estimate was higher yet. In either case, they were too many for two men to pursue, meet in battle, or try to bluff.

"You just can't bluff a Comanche, and that's all there is to it," was the decision of Buffalo Bill.

Red Plume nodded his assent.

"Comanche heap coward, jes' same," the redskin pard asserted, with his natural prejudice against a tribe which his tribe hated.

"That's easy to say," smiled the great scout, who was prejudiced against none, because he knew them all.

"Comanche ride round, round, hide behind horse, heap not dare show himself."

"Pretty good scheme, where there are no trees to hide behind, I reckon," argued Buffalo Bill.

"Ugh!"

The grunt, which was Red Plume's usual wind-up when he could think of nothing more to say on his side of the question, ended the discussion of the merits of the Comanche Indian as an adversary.

But it did not end the Comanche Indians. And Buffalo Bill, with Red Plume, followed that trail over a corner of the Staked Plain, through mesquite, chaparral, and the river timber along a slender tributary of the Rio Pecos, all in Texas.

On the slender tributary just mentioned—the name of which the scout did not know, and which the writer, therefore, cannot positively state—they had camped for the night after the first day's weary journey.

It was a starry night, with no moon. The Indian pard slept the first half of the night, and was awakened by Buffalo Bill a little after midnight.

Then Red Plume stood guard, and the white scout tried to sleep. But he could not. Why, in the first part of his turn, he did not know, for nothing occurred to disturb him beyond the husky quarreling of coyotes and prairies wolves over some carrion which they had found in the edge of the timber.

Once the scout fell into a doze, but he awoke from it with a start, and his heart was beating just as it used to when he was a youngster, and he dreamed of hiding under a bed from Indians—just as most youngsters have dreamed.

Yet in the present case there was no dream—nothing like a nightmare. He lay in a comfortable position. There was no reason to expect a surprise attack from the enemy.

But Buffalo Bill could not even catch a nap after that, and he lay and watched the stars creeping down toward the western horizon, where they soon faded and died before the glory of sunrise.

Then he sprang up. Red Plume was already preparing their breakfast over a small, smokeless fire, which he was especially skillful in making.

A throbbing sound just then agitated the air.

"Shooting!" exclaimed the scout.

He sprang to the edge of the timber and gazed back over the plain which they had crossed the night before.

Not a living object in sight.

Then the firing abruptly ceased.

The atmosphere was in that condition, with the trees in the way to interrupt the sound waves, that the firing had seemed to proceed from a direction exactly opposite the place from which it actually came.

"We've got to cross the creek and get out of the timber belt on that side before we can make out anything," said the scout.

Like the best of doctors, and others who make a success of what they undertake, Colonel Cody made it a point to eat when he was hungry or needed food, no matter what might be pressing at the time.

But they made short work of the job, and the little fire was trampled out, saddles and bridles were flung on, and then almost without speaking they went to look for a place to ford the stream.

The water was not high, and the ford was easy to find.

Once across, they were soon through the belt of timber.

Beyond stretched the Texas plain again, with a gradual downward slope, and covered with mesquite (locally pronounced "mes-kee-ty") and other dwarfish shrubs and the coarse grasses of that region.

At first the eye of Buffalo Bill saw neither life nor movement on that vast plain. But the reason was that he scanned too distant a range. Within a shorter eye-shot squatted a cabin, built of logs.

It was a little box of a hut, and the timber for it must have been hauled from the growth that fringed the creek which our friends had just crossed.

Around that cabin, completely encircling it, were fully thirty mounted Comanches.

Some of these galloped their horses back and forth, occasionally gesticulating signals to the warriors at the opposite side of the ring.

The cabin was about two miles distant. The air was so clear that every object was distinctly visible to the white and red scouts who were observing the cabin and its besiegers.

"That is the crew of Comanches that we have been tracking, Red Plume," said Buffalo Bill, breaking the silence.

The other nodded, but for a moment did not speak. When he did so it was to ask:

"Where prisoner?"

"I don't see any signs of there being one."

"Me, too. Dat queer, heap queer. Dem tell you only twelve Comanche, dere thirty. Me count 'em. Dem tell you they have white prisoner, tie on horse. Me see no white prisoner dere. Heap queer."

Red Plume had been doubtful about the expedition on which they had started out from the beginning.

Buffalo Bill, however, was not one to be easily fooled into starting on a "wild-goose chase," and yet he had not seemed to doubt the genuineness of the commission which had been given him, with the help of his Pawnee pard, to execute.

"At this distance we wouldn't see the prisoner if they had taken him off the horse," said the scout.

"Where horse den? Dem not hide horse heap mighty easy."

"That's so, Red Plume, and it is all a mystery. Still, I reckon they have a captive, and the settlers told us true about that part of the business. But I reckon they set the number of the Comanches that had the captive lower than it really was because they were afraid I might ask some of them to join in the pursuit. And they didn't hanker after the sport."

"Ugh!" was the doubting comment from Red Plume.

When a redskin doubts a thing it takes all creation to convince him that he is mistaken. But then, there are palefaces who are equally hard to convince of error.

"If those fellows were of any tribe but Comanches, we would ride down on them and drive them away with some fast shooting."

"But they have long-range rifles, and they won't be bluffed. It is strategy rather than an open fight that is called for in this case."

Of course, the judgment of Buffalo Bill in this case, as in most others where he did not agree with Red Plume, was the nearer right.

The Pawnee professed so much contempt for the fighting abilities of the warriors of other tribes that he would never own that the odds were too great for making an attack.

Possibly he would have been more cautious had he not been perfectly certain that Cody would block any piece of recklessness that he might propose.

"The question is," added the scout, "what have they inside of that cabin that they're so careful to keep away from it, although they seem to hate to give it up?"

Another grunt was all the suggestion that Red Plume had to offer. At that moment, however, several

of the Indians rode closer to the cabin, discharging their rifles at the same time.

The reports reached the ears of Buffalo Bill and Red Plume with a dull, thudding vibration of the air, as had been the case when their attention had first been called to the attack on the lonely cabin.

Instantly a puff of smoke spouted from the side of the hut—through a loophole, probably.

And one of the Comanches, who was at the moment scurrying away from the cabin, flung up his arms and fell from the saddle.

An exclamation came from the lips of both Cody and the Pawnee at the same time.

"A splendid shot, was that!" muttered Buffalo Bill.

"Heap good!" agreed Red Plume.

"That wakes up my interest and curiosity at a big rate. No ordinary settler would be likely to have a gun to carry that far, nor the eye to train it on the mark if he had the gun."

Could Buffalo Bill have known who was within the log walls of the beleaguered cabin at that moment, it is doubtful if any considerations of prudence could have restrained him from making a dash to drive away the foe.

For the defender, whose single shot picked a Comanche so neatly out of the saddle, was a scout and Indian fighter whose name was second only to that of Cody himself.

The unseen marksman was Pawnee Bill.

CHAPTER II.

A GHOSTLY FIND.

On the very day that Buffalo Bill and Red Plume started in pursuit of the Comanches, who were said to have a white captive with them, Pawnee Bill was racing for a point on the Rio Pecos, bent upon getting there ahead of certain marauding bands of Comanches whom he knew were scouring the plains for mischief.

It was a long, hard ride that he had before him, and, with his usual headlong, put-her-through-or-die style of traveling, he smashed his horse over the trackless plains at a pace which would have been cruel had the animal not seemed as anxious as the rider was to get over the ground.

But both the horse and rider were too ambitious.

The animal seemed to absorb something of his rider's reckless spirit, for he shoved a foot into a gopher hole and went lame to pay for it.

It was the start of a string of bad luck for Pawnee Bill.

He reached the tributary of the Pecos, where Cody and his Pawnee pard encamped several hours ahead of them. He struck the creek at a different point.

As it happened, he had not crossed the trail of the war party of Comanches whom Buffalo Bill was following.

Consequently he did not know that the Indians were in the vicinity until he found out in a most emphatic manner.

He halted at the creek and dismounted long enough to let his horse drink and breathe with a free back. Then he leaped to the saddle again and pushed him through the creek.

The opposite bank was low and shelving, although it looked to be all right.

The horse made a leap to get out of the water, which

was rather deep in that spot for fording. He got a foothold, sprang clear, and then, when his hind feet dug into the bank, a big chunk of it gave way.

Back went the horse, landing in the creek on his back.

Pawnee Bill knew how to get off a horse in a hurry.

That was the piece of experience which he put into use at that interesting moment. There was no time to make calculations, and it took wild guessing to land anywhere except in the creek with the horse on top of him.

His spring carried him clear of the water, but when he landed, it was with one foot on the trunk of a small fallen tree.

The nervy scout closed his teeth with a click to keep back an exclamation of pain.

"Leg broke!" he grunted, and settled down on the ground to think it over and get used to the grinding hurt.

But when he came to think of it he had once broken a leg, and it didn't feel like this. The break was a numb, dismal feeling that went clear up to the back of his neck.

This was the keener, more excruciating pain of joint and tendons. He reached down and rubbed his hand over his ankle, where the ache was hardest, and that time he hardly kept back a yell, the pain was so intense.

"It isn't a break; it's an infernal sprain!" he decided.

The discovery was not much more encouraging.

The horse was floundering to the shore by this time; but Pawnee Bill remembered that the beast was lamed, and so used up for speed for one trip, at best.

"Oh, the luck!" he groaned.

But it couldn't hold down such a man as Pawnee Bill.

He crawled down to the water's edge, peeled off boot and legging and took a squint at the fast-swelling ankle.

"It's a sprain," he repeated. "That will hurt and lay me up for a bit, likely. But it won't take so long to mend as a break."

"If I can only manage to climb onto that wet saddle again, and the horse can amble a few miles farther, things won't turn out so bad, maybe."

"Here goes for treatment with Adam's liniment. Cheap, pure, plenty of it. Thunderation! How it hurts!"

He scooped up "Adam's liniment" from the creek with his hand, and rubbed the fluid gently on the swelling limb.

It was water cure, pure and simple, and if it did not cure, it at least soothed. When the pain got down so he could bear it he cut a stout cane and stood up.

He hobbled out to where his horse was feeding, and after some difficulty got into the saddle.

It was a poor pace that he was obliged to content himself with; but he made the most of it, and was soon traveling at a hipy-hop in the direction of the Rio Pecos once more.

Suddenly he pulled up short with an ejaculation of dismay.

"Same old string of luck, running right with me!" he exclaimed.

The dark eyes of Pawnee Bill flashed defiance—at luck in the shape of the very band of Comanches whom Buffalo Bill was trailing at that blessed minute.

They were not half a mile distant, and riding in a direction running diagonally with his own course.

The redskins discovered him at the same instant that he first put eyes on them. They recognized him, even at that distance. Good reason, indeed, had they to recognize Pawnee Bill, for many a time had he routed and

defeated them in battle, both in the open and in the bush.

But he could not do that thing now, as they observed at the first glance.

They uttered yells of exultation—they set their horses into a racing run—they swung their half-naked bodies to and fro in a reckless abandon of delight at the thought of running down and forever blotting out Pawnee Bill.

Pawnee Bill gritted his teeth and clasped his rifle the tighter. He reckoned on the probable number of the redskins it would be possible for him to drop from their saddles before they should get close enough to drop him.

But it was uncertain reckoning, he knew that. His ankle felt as if it was being twisted in a vise. It was agony to sit in the saddle with that sprain pulling at his nerves.

Just then he caught sight of the lonely log hut out among the mesquite. And he kicked at his horse's flank with his well foot.

The animal responded with quite a spurt of speed, and Pawnee Bill could see the log hut creeping closer.

"If I can get in there I'll make a lot of that crew sick before they get very close to me," was the muttered reflection of the plainsman.

It soon became certain that he would reach the cabin before they should reduce the distance separating them enough to make their shooting dangerous to the fugitive.

He did not think anything about the possible character of the inmates of the cabin, or whether there were any. His only thought then was of getting to any kind of cover.

The Comanches began to pop at him without slackening their pace.

But the distance was so great that he knew there was little danger. The shots did not all go so very far out of the way, however, and he was glad enough to pull up before the cabin.

He looked to see if there was any possible shelter for his horse. But there was none. Then he dismounted and painfully hobbled to the door.

He knocked heavily, and then tried the door without waiting for a response.

It was a situation in which he could not afford to stand on ceremony. The door swung open on creaking hinges.

As he went in he became certain that the cabin had no living inmates. And yet he was thrilled by a strange impression which he could not have explained, and which was not quite comfortable.

By this time it was getting close to sunset—just about the time that Buffalo Bill and Red Plume were nearing the creek where he had met with his mishap.

He closed the cabin door and looked for means by which it might be made fast. He was pleased to find a wooden bar or brace, which he lost no time in placing in position.

He had stripped off his saddle, the blankets, and other articles which he always carried on a journey, and dragged them into the cabin, which he found was provided with loopholes on each of the four sides.

The cabin had also two small windows placed with the bottoms on a level with the face of a man of medium height when standing.

It contained some plain furnishings, such as one might expect to find in a prairie cabin of such outward pretensions. There were but two small rooms on the

ground, and there appeared to be an open loft overhead which could be reached by means of a ladder.

As he glanced out at his foes he was surprised to find that they did not approach any closer to the lone cabin.

They galloped around it at a good distance, and once a shot was fired with such accuracy that Pawnee Bill heard the thud of the bullet in the logs. But he did not attempt to return the compliment.

The truth was, his ankle gave him such pain just then that he hardly cared what might happen to him.

Had the Comanches made a rush for the cabin just at that time of his indifference, through physical pain, the chances are that they could have reached the hut and burst into it almost wholly unresisted.

But—and it looked queer that they should behave in that manner—they hung off at about the same distance as they had halted in the first place.

"They're mighty shy of my shooting," thought Pawnee Bill, with a smile. "Which shows what a big reputation a man may sometimes build up without really deserving it."

At last he relaxed his vigilance somewhat. He noticed what appeared to be a rude bed at one side of the smaller of the two rooms. As he approached it, he was thrilled by the appearance of the bed having an occupant.

Hobbling up to it, he drew the blanket down from the pillow. As he did so he uttered a gasp of horrified amazement.

A skeleton face grinned up at him!

CHAPTER III.

A DASH TO THE RESCUE.

The gruesome "find" of Pawnee Bill, the prairie whirlwind, was enough to have given a strong-nerved man the shivers.

It cannot be said that he was pleased by the discovery of such companionship in the lonely cabin.

But as it couldn't be helped for the time, at least, he made the best of it.

As it was growing dark, he did not stop then to make any further examination of the contents of the cabin, although he was curious to see if something might not be found to throw light upon the identity of the former occupants of the habitation.

Pawnee Bill found a lamp and quite a supply of oil. He hung an old blanket over each of the two windows, and then lit the lamp. The light within being dim, there was no chance of even a ray shining through loopholes or crevices to show any mark for the wily enemy to fire at.

He glanced out frequently to see what the Indians were doing. He was not a little surprised to find that they had retreated to a yet greater distance from the cabin, and that they seemed to have gone into camp for the night. Such proved to be the case.

"Well, they're easy with me, for once," muttered the scout. "And I'm going to be easy with myself and try to get a wink of sleep."

"If they decide to try cleaning me out they won't be likely to try it until near morning. So I will drop down and snooze, with both ears and one eye open."

"There's no way the redskins can get in without making noise enough to wake me up a dozen times over."

And if I lie out of range of the loopholes they can't get a glimpse of me, even if they creep up to the cabin while I am asleep."

Upon this decision Pawnee Bill lay down and was soon in a dreamless sleep.

Meanwhile Buffalo Bill and Red Plume, whom we left as they were observing the maneuvers of the Comanches, noticed that they were growing bolder in their approach to the cabin than they had been when they first glimpsed the Indians in the act of beginning the attack.

They kept riding round and round the cabin, and occasionally one would send a carefully aimed shot at one of the windows.

But none of them could have been effective through the thick walls. And for a time the inmate did not again fire back at them.

At last, however, another puff of smoke darted from a loophole and Cody and the Pawnee saw a second Comanche reel in his saddle, and then plunge earthward.

"That is perfect shooting!" exclaimed the scout.

"It shows that the one inside is a dead shot. But he is putting up a slow fight, just as if he was willing to stay there all day if he could have a chance now and then to drop a redskin out of the saddle.

"It looks almost like a bit of vengeance play. And yet—well, I don't believe it is that."

"Ugh!" came suddenly from Red Plume. "Look!"

Buffalo Bill saw already what attracted the attention of his companion.

Far out on the prairie beyond the lone cabin, two or three of the redskins were gathered in a little knot.

Presently they seemed to be helping something to rise from the ground. The explanation was soon made clear.

From the midst of the shrubby mesquite a horse rose from what must have been a perfectly horizontal position. Then a human figure was lifted from amid the shrubbery and placed on the horse.

"There's their prisoner, after all!" exclaimed Buffalo Bill.

"Yes," nodded Red Plume. "That prisoner. They goin' do something now."

It might have been suspected that it was their intention to abandon the attempt to kill or capture the inmate of the cabin. Yet not for a moment did Cody believe that such was their purpose.

He suspected, instead, that the savages were about to use their captive in some sort of a stratagem for the destruction of the deadly marksman in the cabin.

This decided the scout on the next move in his side of the game. He knew, without asking, that Red Plume would stand by his judgment.

"The one inside that cabin is playing a nervy lone hand," said Cody, "and if he knew we were out here looking on, he would call for an assist, so as to euchre the other side. It is for us to throw what trumps we have into his hand, and to do it now."

Red Plume had played many a card game with his white pard, and he appreciated the figurative terms to their full value.

"Ugh!" he grunted. "Dem Comanche hold heap low trump; right, left bower, joker on our side. We wax 'em."

Their horses were fresh after a long night's rest and had had plenty of feed and water.

The two scouts—the white and the red—mounted un-

der cover of the timber. They saw that saddle girth and weapons were ready for a swift dash and hot shooting.

"We talked as if it was simple euchre that we were going to play," muttered Buffalo Bill. "But it is a case when we've got to work a regular poker bluff. It is where deuces will have to be played so as to beat aces."

Red Plume made no reply to this. He had an idea that Comanches could never hold anything better than low trumps, and that their only show was in the number that they could play.

That was just a streak of natural race prejudice, and the Pawnee chief was full of it.

"Now for it—like a streak!"

Cody gave the word, and the two horses shot out on the plain neck-and-neck.

Both of the horses had been the property of Buffalo Bill, and one had been given by him to Red Plume, for the moment might come while they were together when they would need animals that could match each other in speed and endurance.

They were thus equipped in the present case. And from the instant that they shot out from the shelter of the timber it became a mad race to see which should get within range of the Comanches ahead of the other.

Their sped increased as the steeds warmed to the race. The horses seemed to enter into the spirit of it, as if it were a handicap, and there were hurdles ahead to be leaped over, or a fence to smash through.

The Comanches are great horsemen; but if they ever had any close rivals among the Indian race they were numbered among the Pawnees.

Red Plume believed there was no one in the world like Buffalo Bill. He tried to shoot like him and to ride as easily as he. The red chief succeeded as well as any man ever did.

The plain, as has been stated, was a gradual downward slope, and that favored the wind of the racers. It was a short heat at that, and they ate up the distance at a dizzy clip.

A fourth of it was spanned before the Comanches saw them, even.

Meanwhile the redskins had not been idle, although, at the rate they were moving, Buffalo Bill and the Pawnee could not keep track of the maneuvers of their enemies. They only saw that the horse upon which they had mounted the prisoner was being led toward the cabin.

Buffalo Bill kept as close a watch on their movements as did the Pawnee chief. What he observed was on a line with his prediction that they would resort to a ruse to gain an advantage over the marksman in the hut.

After leading the horse bearing the captive to within about five hundred yards of the cabin, the animal was halted, and the Indian at its head suddenly ran back and leaped on the horse back of the prisoner.

Then, carefully shielding his own body behind the person of the captive, the redskin approached the cabin at a bolder and faster pace.

"That's the trick," thought the scout. "Yet, if I were in that cabin I reckon I could find room to plant a bullet in that redskin without touching the prisoner, though it would be a rather close mark. The prisoner wouldn't have to worry as long as he didn't know the shot was coming."

By this time there was a decided commotion among the Comanches. They saw Buffalo Bill and Red Plume riding down upon them with just as much confidence as

though they were backed by a company of government troops.

Some of the redskins glanced back in the direction of the timber belt, expecting to see a company of soldiers come clanking out from among the shadows.

But as they gazed and saw no signs of the red and white scouts having backers, the Comanches regained their confidence and turned to support the one of their number who was attempting to beat the inmate of the cabin by strategy.

It looked like a sure thing. The redskin, with the prisoner, quickened the pace of his horse when he got to within a hundred yards of the cabin.

Then he dug his heels into the horse's sides, slapped the animal's neck, and dashed ahead like mad.

Buffalo Bill was almost within range, but the distance was too great to allow him to try a shot, although the figure of the Indian was presented better to his view than it could have been to the eye of the inmate of the besieged cabin.

Closer came the Comanche with the form of his prisoner in front of him. That prisoner the scout could now see was a woman.

This in itself was enough to make the one in the hut the more reluctant to hazard a shot at the enemy.

"That redskin will get so close that the one inside can't shoot in a minute more," exclaimed Buffalo Bill.

"Look!" came from Red Plume.

A jet of smoke and flame had again spurted from the loophole of the cabin.

The crack of the rifle in the hut and a death yell from the Comanche chimed in with a scream of terror from the captive, the sounds all reaching the ears of the approaching scouts at the same instant.

The Comanche tumbled over backward.

But the captive was unhurt!

"Good!—jes' like White Buffalo!" exclaimed Red Plume.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FUGITIVE.

The Comanches, hearing the shot from the cabin and seeing their comrade, who had boldly sought alone to obtain the advantage which they could not obtain together, fall from the horse of the captive, were made wild with rage.

At the same time they could see that Buffalo Bill and Red Plume were bound to ride down upon them, and there were some among the Indians who recognized Buffalo Bill, the border king.

A moment before they had been sure of everything, as they supposed. Now they would have to fight to hold what they had, and against the greatest dead shot they had ever seen, and that was not all.

Their white captive was alone on the horse and fully a hundred yards distant from the nearest of her captors.

If she were bound hand and foot, it is true, she would have no means of guiding her horse.

But the latter was headed toward the cabin, and the report of the rifle, with the sense of having lost a part of his burden, excited the animal into a gallop.

The prisoner, therefore, was being borne directly toward the cabin, and away from her foes.

The air was filled with their hideous yells. They

pushed their ponies into a wild and reckless dash to cut off the flight of the captive.

The latter, realizing that there was a chance, however faint, for her to escape, seemed to be urging her horse to a better pace with her voice, which was all the means she could command.

By this time Buffalo Bill was near enough to open fire, although the range was a long one.

The first shot was not thrown away, although the redskin who was bitten was only wounded by it.

It was enough to throw him out of the race, however, and it told his comrades what they had to expect.

Red Plume, ambitious to emulate the great scout, made a try with his rifle.

It missed the chosen mark, but it nipped the horse instead of the rider, so that, for a little, the latter was carried out of the line on account of his horse being uncontrollable.

Then Pawnee Bill, from within the cabin, blocked the life game of another Comanche with one of his wonderful shots. And it began to look as though numbers did not count for everything in a fight on the open prairie.

But Comanches are not the sort to frighten easily. They saw that they were in the game for keeps—to run away would not protect them from the marksmanship of their enemies, while it would insure the escape of their captive, and, for some reason, the prospect of losing their prisoner seemed to make them wild.

The next moment their bodies slid from sight behind the shoulders of their horses, after the fashion which Red Plume had spoken of so contemptuously. And, with their rifles aimed at Buffalo Bill and Red Plume, they began a return fire, which was to make the game a two-sided one.

By this time, amid all the hurry of incidents around her, the Comanche captive reached a point quite close to the cabin.

At the same moment the door of the hut was thrown open and Pawnee Bill appeared at the opening.

Leaning upon a stick, he hobbled over the threshold and tried to head off the horse of the captive.

"This way, miss, if you can only manage to guide the horse!" he called to her.

"Yes, yes!—if I only might," came back in a voice that thrilled with the hope of escape.

"Holy powers!" exclaimed Buffalo Bill, as he obtained a glimpse of the one in the doorway of the cabin. "It is Pawnee Bill—and that was his shooting that made the Comanches fight so shy."

The border king tried to spur his horse to a better clip—to a final burst that should win the goal when it needed winning as it had not before for many a day.

But a horse can only do his best, and that was being done and a noble best it was.

The bullets from the Comanches began to whistle and hiss in the ears of Cody and his Pawnee pard.

It was a moment when the Indian nature would have prompted the latter to seek shelter of some sort. Red Plume had courage enough; he was not afraid of death or of pain. But he had never been trained to overcome the nature inherited from his ancestors, every man of whom had fought from behind a tree or a rock.

Here there were no trees or rocks, and the great White Buffalo, the paleface chief, who, in Red Plume's eyes, was the bravest hunter in the world, seemed not

to mind the sputtering rifles of his foes or the sibilant hiss of the lead that was being thrown at and about them.

It was being in open battle, that is just what it was, and no man, red or white, can be in that position and feel just as he thinks he would feel before he had ever been there.

But Red Plume did not lose his head. He expected to lose his life, and the thought of that being forfeited to a "cowardly dog" of a Comanche was what was hard. He meant to sell it at a high price.

Lying close to the neck of his horse, he fired fast and well, and he was sure that at least two of the Comanches who were left to kick and roll in the prairie grass, with hurts that they would never get over, were his game.

With Buffalo Bill it became partly a business of shooting horses. With his skill it was easy for him to put a shot through the foot of a Comanche that showed over the back of his steed.

But that merely lamed the redskin and left him to cling to the bridle and probably escape on a straight runaway.

It was better, in his judgment, to kill the horse by a dead shot in the brain, that was without a touch of cruelty, and leave the rider without means of escape and a fair mark for another shot.

He did that very thing twice while he was yet a good way from the cabin. Then, seeing how matters stood with the Comanche captive, he decided to change the complexion of things in that quarter.

While she seemed to be trying to guide the horse toward the open door of the cabin, where Pawnee Bill stood ready to give her his protection, the animal veered off and was bearing her away in a straight line across the prairie.

The woman—or girl, for none of our friends had yet obtained a glimpse of her face so as to tell whether she were young or old—appeared to be entirely helpless.

She was swathed in a blanket and her head and face were almost entirely hidden by a hood.

She appeared to be bound to the saddle. Her hands were out of sight, but as it seemed likely that she would not have allowed the horse to run away from the chance of rescue had she been able to grasp the rein, the scouts all assumed that they also were bound.

Indeed, it was somewhat surprising, considering the violent movements of her horse, that she was not thrown from the saddle.

Buffalo Bill saw that the captive was in a fair way of being borne back to where her captors could again surround and prevent her rescue by her friends.

There was only one way to stop it. It would risk giving her a fall from the horse—indeed, fall she must—but he did not hesitate.

The animal had to be sacrificed. A single, sure shot found the brain of the captive's horse and sent steed and rider to the earth.

To the surprise of Buffalo Bill, who fired the shot, and of Pawnee Bill, who was closer to the captive at the moment, the latter fell clear of the horse, and her limbs seemed to be free.

She uttered a scream, and in what appeared to be a fit of bewilderment, started to run in a direction which took her away from the shelter of the cabin instead of toward it.

"Here, miss! They'll have you again if you go that way!" cried Pawnee Bill.

"Oh, what shall I do?" cried the captive then, and in a voice which was so sweet that they knew she must be young.

Pawnee Bill was one of the most gallant and chivalrous men living. Buffalo Bill was equally so, in a way, but not so apt to forget everything else when there happened to be a woman around who needed his aid.

In this case Pawnee Bill forgot that he had a badly sprained ankle and set out to hobble out to where the frightened girl seemed bent on going around in a circle.

The pain made him grit his teeth, and yet he got over the ground at a rate that quickly brought him to the side of the Comanche captive.

Even then she appeared to think that he must be one of her late captors, for she uttered a little scream and started to run away from him.

"No, you don't, miss!" exclaimed the scout. "And in a flash he had a grip on her arm that she could not throw off if she tried.

Then she looked at him, and said:

"I—I thought the Indians had caught me again!"

"Not this time, miss. But they'll have you sure if you don't help yourself over the ground a bit, for I can't carry you.

"Quick, miss—my ankle—sprained—hurts pretty tough!"

Pawnee Bill pushed her ahead of him while he hobbled back to the cabin door.

It was all done quicker than can be told, and when Pawnee and the girl were close together, the Comanches stopped shooting at him.

It was plain that they were particular to secure her alive. While Pawnee Bill was in the doorway, they had not been in a position to get a fair shot at him. Therefore he had had a very good show, as compared with that of Buffalo Bill and Red Plume, who had been under fire from the first moment that they came within range of the Comanches' weapons.

It sometimes seems that men in such a situation bear charmed lives.

You may think that men do not go through a storm of bullets, without getting killed or badly hurt, outside of a story.

But read the accounts of many battles, some of them recent ones in the Philippines, in which a handful of Yankee soldiers have wiped out scores of the enemy with hardly the loss of a man, and been in a storm of lead and other equally dangerous missiles all the while.

A clear head, alert judgment, perfect coolness—these and kindred qualities win out, and the possessor, like Buffalo Bill and a few others among the world's heroes, are said to bear a "charmed life."

To tell of the adventures and victories of such men we need not exaggerate.

So, as Pawnee Bill gently pushed the Comanche captive ahead of him in the cabin, Buffalo Bill and Red Plume dashed up to the door with hardly a scratch to show for the fusillade of the Comanches.

The latter, with just eight of their number out of the race for good, and minus the captive whom they had taken so much pains to guard, were beating a retreat out of range of the rifles that never seemed to fail when a mark was chosen.

The two scouts entered the cabin and closed the door.

CHAPTER V.

THE COMANCHE CAPTIVE.

The moment that Pawnee Bill got inside of the door of the hut he flung himself with a groan at full length on the blanket where he had laid during the night.

The sprain of his ankle was severer than even he had thought, and as yet the tide had not turned toward improvement.

In going to the rescue of the fair captive of the Comanches he had momentarily forgotten his hurt, and stepped quite heavily upon the injured limb.

The result was a paroxysm of pain which was far more intense than that he had suffered when the injury occurred.

Buffalo Bill sprang to his side, seeing at a glance that his pard's face was white as death, and that his forehead was beaded with perspiration.

"Why, man, what is the matter?" exclaimed the border king.

"Sprain, that's all. Gave it an extra twist just now, and it makes a fuss about it. Give me your flask. I'm faint."

The flask was given, but the scout took only a short pull at it. He closed his eyes and the color began to creep back into his bronzed cheeks.

"How long have you been here in this shape?" asked Buffalo Bill, when Pawnee Bill again opened his eyes.

"Since last night."

"How did you get the hurt?"

Pawnee Bill briefly explained, adding a short account of the incidents of the night.

"That is why those Comanches hung 'round here so sharp—they thought their chance to wind you up had come at last."

"It did look like it for a while. But what fetches you this way, Cody? And that Injun with you?"

"It's Red Plume, my Pawnee pard. He will stand by me and fight hostiles of any tribe as long as any one would, save you, Gordon. And he has had a good hand in the little business we've done here this morning."

"I like his looks. But—what're we thinking of, old man, to let the young lady stand there without a word of attention?"

Pawnee Bill would actually have gotten up onto that tender ankle again had Buffalo Bill not gently forced him to lie down again.

The late captive of the Comanches, after entering the protecting walls of the cabin, had gone to one of the small windows and stood silently looking out across the prairie toward the Indian survivors of the hot, quick battle which had been fought, mostly, as it appeared, on her account.

They were retreating, but at a moderate pace, for they had several wounded to look out for.

In truth, of the thirty warriors who had been on hand at the beginning of the attack on the cabin, not above fifteen remained in shape to put up anything of a fight.

The girl was still closely wrapped in the blanket, and the queer hood about her head and face would have made many young women look like frights.

Not so with this young lady, however. Her bright, dark eyes, fresh complexion, and some wisps of golden hair that straggled over her forehead made up a face

that no kind of a frame could deprive in its peculiar beauty.

It would have been hard to read the expression of that face as she gazed after her late captors.

She certainly did not look as if she had been made to suffer very seriously as yet in her captivity. And Red Plume, who had time to observe her in his sly, furtive way, saw her smile once, as if there had been something amusing about her adventure.

Seeing that smile made Red Plume grunt and shrug his shoulders.

Having made Pawnee Bill agree to lie still for a while, Buffalo Bill turned his attention to the young lady.

"You are out of the clutches of that party, miss, and you may thank your good streak of luck that you are," said the scout.

She faced him, and Cody decided that he had never before looked into just such a pair of eyes.

"Do you suppose they would have burned me at the stake?" she asked, with an odd curl of her lips.

"No, I reckon they wouldn't have done that."

"Made me run the gantlet, perhaps?"

"Hardly that, either."

"Then, why didn't they give me a quick send-off—I mean, why didn't they kill me outright instead of taking the trouble to lug me around?"

"The chances are, miss, that they would have assigned you to one of their chiefs for an extra wife. If you had been old and ugly they would have made short work of disposing of you."

"I'm glad I wasn't old and ugly, then, for I wasn't ready to be disposed of. But I suppose you expect me to say something nice to you for taking the trouble to rescue me from a terrible fate. So I will say that it was very gallant in you, and also in the dark gentleman who came running after me when his ankle was hurting him so."

A slight frown crossed the brow of Buffalo Bill. He had a feeling that this pretty, saucy-eyed girl was making a jest of the part Pawnee Bill had played in saving her from the Comanches.

For himself, Cody did not care.

But Pawnee Bill was a man to throw away his life for anybody who was helpless and in danger or trouble, and he never counted pain or hunger when he was in the service of some one who needed him.

There were many who would have said as much and more of Buffalo Bill. But the latter was not the man to dwell in his mind on his own sterling qualities of mind and heart.

"The dark gentleman is Major Gordon Lillie, called by the scores of good men and women who know and admire him, Pawnee Bill. He is known by the Indians as Kulux—Kittibux, "Little Bear."

"Indeed! How glad I am to meet such a distinguished gentleman. And may I ask who it is that gives so much praise to another and takes so little credit to himself?"

"I am Colonel Cody, and like Major Lillie, a government scout."

"Is that all? And yet you really look like a—a—but I won't say it, for it wouldn't do you justice. I can see by your face, Colonel Cody, that you think I don't mean all I say. Truly, I mean a great deal that I haven't said."

Here was a puzzler—this handsome girl, who had such a new way of thanking them for saving her from

captivity among the most merciless crew of redskins to be found in that part of the country.

The scout did not know just what to say. But he felt like saying something sharp to her.

The face of Buffalo Bill became stern and his voice cold and polite as he said:

"Will you oblige me by giving me your name, miss?"

"Call me Miss Hallam—Bertha Hallam."

"You were captured by the Comanches, we were told, while you were on your way from Barstow Settlement to Barstow Ranch yesterday morning?"

"May I ask who told you that?" the girl asked.

"A settler at Barstow. It seemed to be generally known about the settlement."

"Oh, well, let it go at that, then."

What did the girl mean? Buffalo Bill asked himself.

He had seen frontier girls who had the nerve to fight Indians with the best of them, or to break horses and lasso steers.

But this one was not like them. A little while ago she had seemed to be so frantic with fear that she did not know which way to turn to escape from the Indians who were closing about her.

She seemed so bewildered and beside herself that she would certainly have fallen into the hands of her captors again but for the self-sacrificing efforts of Pawnee Bill.

And now she appeared ready to treat the whole affair as a joke, and to throw doubt on the information which had been given Buffalo Bill, and which had sent him on a ride to the rescue.

"I'm afraid, Miss Hallam," said the scout, "that you will have to wait until my good friend, Pawnee, here, gets so he can ride before we can see you back safe at Barstow."

"Oh, never mind such a little delay as that, Colonel Cody. There are plenty of ways than I can amuse myself while I am waiting."

The girl irritated Buffalo Bill more and more by her flippant speech and airs.

Then it occurred to him that she had seemed to be free from her bonds the moment she fell clear of her horse.

"Were you tied onto the horse by your captors just now, when they used you for a shield in trying to get at the one in the cabin?"

"Not very securely, I believe."

The scout tried to look into her eyes, but when she would meet his gaze she seemed to be just ready to laugh in his face.

"I reckon, miss, that you weren't tied on at all."

"Come to think of it, I don't believe I was."

"And your arms, too, were they free?"

"How inquisitive you are about those little things, Colonel Cody! Whatever can you care whether I was bound or free while the Comanches used me for a possible bullet catcher?"

"They knew that the man in the cabin would never fire a shot that could endanger a hurt, however slight, to the woman captive."

"Of course—that was why they played the trick."

"So your hands were free, when we thought they were bound so that you could not guide your horse, and that was why he turned back toward your captors. Miss Hallam, Major Lillie risked his life and suffered great pain to save you from recapture, when, unless I'm greatly mistaken, you would have preferred that the redskins got hold of you again! Am I right or wrong?"

The pretty eyes of the strange girl fell under the accusing gaze of Buffalo Bill.

Without a word in reply she suddenly turned and went to the side of Pawnee Bill, who had fallen into a momentary doze, on account of exhaustion from pain.

CHAPTER VI.

DRIVEN BACK TO COVER.

It had been the original intention of Pawnee Bill to keep on until the River Pecos settlements were reached.

But the sprain would make it impossible for him to ride for twenty-four hours, at least.

He wanted Buffalo Bill and Red Plume to push on to his destination. But Cody would not listen to it.

He found that Pawnee Bill, besides having a sprained ankle, was not in quite his usual health in other respects.

The reason was that the brave fellow had been trying to get along for a week without sleep and sometimes without sufficient or suitable food, just because he was so busy trying to give warning to all creation about the Indian outbreaks, which were spreading all along the border.

The sprain was the final thing that pulled him down.

Probably twenty-four hours of perfect rest would put him in shape to travel. But Buffalo Bill would not bear of a minute short of that.

"And it has got to be rest, too," added the great scout. "You can't sleep with one eye open and listening for redskins. You can't do a thing but just snooze and eat."

"I happen to know that our fun with the Comanches has only begun. They're the worst of all redskins when it comes to sticking to a vengeance trail."

"We have done them some damage this morning, and don't you reckon for a minute that they won't lay for us to pay for it?"

"As for Miss Hallam, here, I suppose it was in the contract that she be restored to her people at Barstow."

The girl had been standing at the window, as she had done much of the time since entering the cabin, gazing out across the boundless plain.

In a low voice Pawnee Bill had told Buffalo Bill of the gruesome find under the blankets in the corner of the smaller cabin room.

Since making the discovery, just after his arrival the night before, he had flung a wolfskin, which he found there, over the pallet.

It had not been thought best by either Buffalo Bill or Pawnee Bill to mention the matter to Red Plume or Bertha Hallam.

The Indian was likely to have superstitious fears about the presence of a human skeleton in the cabin. The girl, if she were like most girls, would not wish to stay in the cabin an hour if she knew about it.

"Likely that somebody lived here alone," said Jack, as he discussed the matter with Buffalo Bill, "and he got sick and died. Nobody has been here since to find it out."

"Did you make any examination so as to form a judgment about the length of time the thing has been there?"

"No. All I saw was the skull and a glimpse of the neck and one shoulder. It is as dead and dry as a mummy."

"It would take a full year to put it in that condition."

"Longer, I reckon."

"You have made no search of the cabin to find a clew to the identity of the former occupant?"

"No, it was all I could do to get around just what was necessary. Besides, the Comanches kept me on the watch most of the time."

"You say they found that you were here last night?"

"They chased me to cover and here is where I got in."

"But they didn't follow up the attack last night after sunset?"

"No. They kept off a good distance. They acted mighty queer about it."

"It couldn't have been on account of their fear for your shooting altogether, for they could have crept up closer at night without much danger, if they had only tried for it."

"That's the way I figured on the game."

"Then how do you account for their being so shy?"

Pawnee Bill shrugged his shoulders.

"I reckon something about the place scared them at some time in the past and they haven't forgotten it."

"Maybe a search of the shanty will show up something that will explain the business. There is a loft overhead, and another small room partitioned off as you see. The skeleton is in the smaller room. I didn't look around in there any except to find a loophole, so that I could show the red devils that I wasn't asleep."

"Another thing, Gordon," continued Buffalo Bill. "What do you think of the girl that we took so much trouble to rescue from the Comanches?"

"I think what you think, maybe, Bill. She might have escaped without our help, I reckon, if she had wanted to. Now, I don't know what we'd better do with her."

The border king frowned. There was another aspect of the case which had not seemed to occur to Pawnee Bill.

"If that girl rode up to the cabin in the way she did, helping the redskins in their strategy, what is the reason that she isn't as much responsible for the trick that was meant to take your life as the Comanches are?"

"Looks on the outside as if she was as much to blame as anybody—rather more, I reckon, for she took advantage of our confidence in her, and we would have done her a good turn."

It could not have been that Bertha Hallam caught any word of the mention which was made of her.

Yet she abruptly turned from the window and advanced to where Buffalo Bill was sitting on the ground beside the pallet of Pawnee Bill.

She glanced from one to the other, as if trying to make out what they thought of her. Then she said:

"I have set you to guessing about me, haven't I?"

"You could stop the guessing mighty easy, miss, by just giving us some facts to work on. It isn't idle curiosity, understand? Major Lillie, here, risked his life to save you, and then he finds out that you didn't need or want his help."

"It is the same with you, isn't it?"

And the girls bright eyes looked straight into those of Buffalo Bill.

"Red Plume and I were on the trail of your captors, and we shouldn't have come in this direction except to run them down and rescue you. So you can figure that out to suit yourself."

"That makes it look as if I had played the decoy to draw you into danger. I should think you would bind

me hand and foot, and serve me as you would any other spy or traitor."

"You talk queerly, Miss Hallam. If you have anything to own up to, blaze away, and we'll execute judgment after we know the facts."

"I shall own up to nothing, except to say that I am sorry—if you are sorry—that you took the trouble and risk to rescue me from the Comanches. I did not intend to act as a decoy, and I had no thought of being a traitor. That is all I can say."

"And that's enough for me!" exclaimed Pawnee Bill, who found it hard to believe that this girl could have acted a treacherous part

Buffalo Bill was not so easily convinced

"You don't explain the puzzle, then, Miss Hallam?" he asked

"I'm sorry, but I can't do that now"

"Do you deny that you would have returned to the Indians if we had allowed you to?"

"I do not deny it"

"Or that you were not bound to the horse, or otherwise confined when you rode toward the cabin with the Comanche warrior behind you on the same horse?"

"I don't deny that, Mr Cody."

"But you refuse to explain?"

"I cannot explain."

"Then you refuse?"

"You are bound to put it that way, so let it go!"

"You wish, then, to have us set you free, and allow you to return to the Comanches?"

"I haven't said that."

"Do you wish to go back to them?"

"Not now. No, I want to go back to the settlement if you will take me with you. I don't want to ever see another Comanche Indian. You are kind, both of you, and I like you."

The cheeks of the strange girl were flushed and her eyes shone like stars.

"Come, Bill, don't puzzle her with any more questions," pleaded Pawnee Bill.

"I didn't intend to," replied the border king.

A little later in the day Buffalo Bill and Red Plume rode out upon the prairie and made a complete circuit of the cabin, covering a wide area.

Not a living thing could they discern within the wide range of their vision.

"Think you, Red Plume, that we have seen the last of those Comanches?" questioned Buffalo Bill.

When they were alone together, the Pawnee was free enough to talk, but at the cabin, in the presence of Bertha Hallam, it was hard to get a word out of him.

"They come back bime-by," was his answer, as he scanned the horizon.

"In bigger force, if they come—and I think you are right, for they will want to take it out of us to pay for the warriors of their party that we killed."

"It is a pity that we can't be making the most of this time either in warning or defending settlers, or in getting the young lady to a place of safety."

"Ugh!" grunted Red Plume.

Then he fell silent and glum.

"What do you make of it, Red Plume?"

"Me think white girl heap talk—talk—heap make believe. No like girl like that, heap."

"You have taken a notion against her because she doesn't dress up like a squaw."

"No, no, she have fine eyes, heap pretty. But me heap not like talk—talk all time."

The Pawnee had expressed his opinion, and Buffalo Bill knew that nothing less than an earthquake could upset it.

They were about half way between the cabin and the timber that bordered the creek and they wheeled their horses to leisurely approach the cabin. But Buffalo Bill turned to take a parting squint at the timber belt.

As he did so a long line of smoke jets spurted from along the front of the timber, and the air around the heads of the red scout and the white seemed to swarm with hissing, leaden messengers.

A low cry escaped the lips of Red Plume.

At the same time his horse dropped as if his legs had been cut from under him.

The Pawnee landed on his feet.

A streak of dark red splotched his cheek, and oozed drops that fell onto his tunic.

Quick as lightning, Buffalo Bill brought his horse alongside of his red pard, caught him by the arm, and half dragged him to the rear of his own saddle.

"Now we race for cover!" muttered Cody, digging the spurs into his horse.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DISCOVERY UNDER THE CABIN.

Another rattling volley was poured from the cover of the timber, while the enemy still refrained from showing even the smallest patch of a mark for a return shot.

Buffalo Bill did not stop then to make blind shots which would be almost sure to lodge harmlessly in the trunks of trees.

The distance to the cabin was not great, but for a hundred yards or so it was really a race with bullets.

Cody's horse was in such prime condition that it did not at first seem to feel the double burden, although the Pawnee was considerably heavier than Buffalo Bill.

The pace was nearly, if not quite, as rapid as it would have been had the burden been but the usual one.

The scout did not spare the horse for the distance, in which its best was needed. It was a case of life or death, and there was more than a chance that his own animal would be struck, as had been the one ridden by Red Plume.

There was no time then for regrets over the loss of the splendid steed of the Pawnee chief, hard as it would be to find another which would so perfectly match that of Buffalo Bill.

Such a match was most desirable, in view of the twain journeying, pursuing, or fleeing almost constantly together.

The hidden enemy continued firing as fast as they could manipulate their weapons. And it was evident that they possessed rifles of the pattern which was in most general use at the time.

Buffalo Bill lay close upon the neck of his horse, and Red Plume clung in a half-reclining posture, flat upon his stomach, across the animal's rump.

The white scout had not been under a hotter fire for many a day, and when the whine of the flying bullets over his head finally ceased, it seemed to him almost a miracle that he had not been touched.

At last he straightened up and gave a backward glance.

The firing had ceased as suddenly as it had begun. Yet not one of the foes showed himself.

"That is a queer break for Comanches to make, don't you think so, Red Plume?" exclaimed Buffalo Bill, as he wiped the perspiration from his cheeks.

"Heap queer. 'Fraid White Buffalo get sight, he shoot so straight. Dey not give him chance wax 'em same he did odder Comanche."

"I reckon you have got it right. We did make it rather costly for them when we drove them away from the cabin. That was a fight in the open, and they think they'll do business in future according to their old style.

"Well, I'm glad they didn't chase us. There is a big crew of them in the timber yonder, to judge by the lead they slung after us in the minutes they were about it."

"Heap big crew," agreed Red Plume.

"The survivors of the party that attacked Pawnee Bill must have fallen in with this bigger party soon after they beat their retreat this morning. Then the whole outfit got to the timber by a roundabout way. They meant to lay for us to-night, and if we hadn't given them such a good chance to try their guns on us just now we should have heard nothing from them until after sunset."

"That it," said Red Plume.

Buffalo Bill had noticed the slight wound on the Indian's cheek, but made no allusion to it, as he knew that the Pawnee preferred always that no notice should be taken of injuries of that character. He regarded them as beneath his own notice.

"Now we'll hear from them again as soon as the sun goes down, I reckon. I'm afraid, Red Plume, that we ought to get away from here before night shuts down on us; and yet I don't see how it can be done."

"White Buffalo think Kulux Kittibux not able ride?" asked Red Plume.

"I know he isn't. He is about as near sick as you can figure. But the sprain is what let him down all at once."

"Me see; leg heap swell up."

In another moment they pulled up in front of the cabin.

The door of the latter was open wide and Pawnee Bill had crawled to the threshold, while Bertha Hallam was outside, showing great excitement and concern as Buffalo Bill and his red pard broke up.

"You—you were not struck, Colonel Cody?" she exclaimed.

"No."

"But Red Plume—"

"Had his horse shot from under him, and received a scratch. Happened to be his turn. Don't pity him—you'll make him ugly if you do. We're sorry about the horse, though—we're likely to need it."

"There seemed to be a great deal of shooting," said the girl.

"Enough to have wiped out a regiment if half the lead had found a mark."

Buffalo Bill and Red Plume dismounted and staked out the horse. Then the former went in to tell Pawnee Bill how matters stood.

He had crawled back to his pallet, and had his teeth clenched with the pain which his sudden exertion had brought on.

"We've got to get away from here before the night shuts down, Bill," was his verdict.

"You can't ride."

"Then get along and leave me."

"Do you reckon that I'll do that?"

"I reckon you'll have to or be wiped out. And if you, Red Plume and the girl go on, the Comanches out in the timber won't be likely to suspect that one of your crowd was left here for them to gobble. Besides, there's another reason, I think, why they wouldn't be likely to molest me."

"What is that?"

"I reckon they have got an idea that this shanty is sort of haunted. That would explain why they were so shy about attacking me after sundown last night."

"Possibly."

"Then you don't have to worry about leaving me while I grunt it out with my leg alone. And the quicker you get on your way toward the Rio Pecos settlements, the better all around."

"I don't leave you here, Gordon," said Buffalo Bill.

"Then I suppose I'll have to get you to tie me onto a horse to keep along with you. If the pain makes me howl so you can't stand it, put a bullet into me. Better than to leave me to the mercy of those red devils."

"You will stay here, and we'll put up the best fight we can. I don't reckon the girl counts the danger from the Comanches as much, anyway. Why, I can't figure out."

"Oh, you're the settest galoot, Bill, when you start out!" said Pawnee Bill, and he turned his face to the wall and lay as still as though he had fallen asleep.

Buffalo Bill felt his pulse and found it of the sort that goes with fever and pain. And that clinched his decision all the harder.

"We'll have to make the night of it here," he decided. "But I'm going to see what kind of a place we have to depend on for shelter before night sets in. The dark will be here soon enough."

Without speaking of his intention to any one, Buffalo Bill set about making a more thorough examination of the interior of the cabin than had yet been made.

He first examined and sounded the walls of the outer room, which was the larger of the two the cabin contained.

He made no discoveries worth noting.

Then he went into the smaller room, where Pawnee Bill had made the gruesome find.

A hurried examination of the skeleton showed it to have been that of a man of medium stature. There were indications that hinted at illness, and possibly starvation, as having been the cause of death.

The scout desired to make use of this part of the cabin if they were to remain there through the night, and it was essential that the skeleton be disposed of.

To accomplish this without letting either the girl or Red Plume know of its presence was not a simple proposition.

But the scout found that the cabin contained quite an assortment of implements, and among others was a spade.

The floor was of earth, trodden quite hard.

To make certain of not being intruded upon while about the disagreeable job, Buffalo Bill requested Red Plume to go out and see that the horses were all staked out in a new spot to feed, and as close as possible to the cabin.

At the same time he asked Bertha Hallam to renew the bandage which he had applied to the swollen ankle of Pawnee Bill.

This would keep both busy for some minutes, and the scout set about making the most of the time in digging a grave in the earth within the small room of the shanty.

He chose a spot close to the wall.

He had hardly thrust his spade into the ground before he discovered that there was something harder than the trodden earth a few inches beneath the surface.

He tried in vain to dig at the point where he began, and gradually tried different spots farther and farther away from the first until he found one where the point of the spade sank into the earth quite easily.

Then he pried a little, quickly discovering that the hard surface was that of planks or boards, buried about five inches beneath the surface.

"The man that lived and died here had treasure of some sort that he buried, I reckon. But that may not signify that what he counted as valuable would be reckoned as worth anything to the finder. But it may throw some light on the name and history of the poor devil who pegged out of life here alone, and didn't even have the honor of a burial," mused Buffalo Bill.

Buffalo Bill expected to find that the hard surface struck by the point of his spade would prove to be a wooden box in which some of the belongings which had been prized by the unknown were buried.

There is a natural eagerness over a discovery of that nature, and the great scout began to dig the earth away from the hard board surface with a rapidity that soon left enough of it bare so that he could judge of its dimensions.

When he tried to dig the earth away from the sides of what he supposed to be a box he found that it had no side wall at all. It appeared to be merely a board covering set a few inches beneath the surface, with an excavation underneath.

This discovery excited the scout's interest more deeply than the idea of the buried box had done.

He scooped off the layer of earth, jabbed at the boards, got the point of the spade under the edge of one of them, and up it came.

The opening thus revealed was several feet in depth, and about four feet square.

While he could not see the bottom very plainly, he thought it appeared to slope gradually, and to descend into a sort of excavated corridor running under the wall of the cabin, how far beyond he could only conjecture.

"This is a find, anyhow!" exclaimed Buffalo Bill.

At first he had thought of hidden treasure; and that interested him as a matter of curiosity rather than possible profit.

Now he thought of something else, which interested him much more deeply.

Several circumstances which in his mind connected themselves with this discovery caused him to jump at a conclusion which a moment before he would have laughed at as utterly absurd.

He remembered that there was a considerable natural depression in the prairie at a certain point out a little way from the cabin. There seemed to have been a

stream there at some remote period, which had gouged out something of a gully, and then, getting discouraged, had retreated and given up the task of cutting a passage through to the Rio Pecos.

The narrow, chutelike passage extending under that wall of the cabin ran directly toward the dry, clayey-banked gully.

The scout listened for sounds in the outer apartment of the cabin. He heard the faint murmur of Bertha Hallam's voice.

She was talking to Pawnee Bill.

Buffalo Bill plunged down into the excavation.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEATH TRAP.

The impression of Buffalo Bill concerning the slope and extent of the excavation under the wall of the cabin was correct.

While the beginning of the discovery was a surprise to him, the sequence was almost precisely what he was led to believe from its indications.

The bottom of the excavation directly under the entrance was about five feet from the top. But from there it sloped rapidly, and he saw ahead of him a passage or channel cut through the clayey earth and leading into the darkness for a distance which he could only conjecture.

He had his pocket lantern, and this he lighted before attempting to explore the passage. Then he proceeded rather cautiously, yet with as much speed as was consistent with care.

By keeping count of the paces he had taken, he judged that he had traversed a distance of fully a hundred feet when he came to a wall, or partition, of boards.

In his progress he had marked one fact—this was that the passage was not entirely artificial.

Indeed, for the greater part of the way it seemed to have been made, at some time in the remote past, by an underground stream.

This natural passage had been dug out and smoothed in places, however, by the hand of man, and this at no very remote date.

While it was not perfectly straight in its course, the scout was convinced that it would lead him to the gully below the regular prairie level, which has been already alluded to.

He had brought the spade along, and with this he did not hesitate to batter down the board partition.

Beyond he found the passage in the same condition, and he was at a loss to see why the partition had been placed there at all.

But Buffalo Bill did not stop to think about these minor matters then.

There was another aspect of his discovery which promised to be of importance.

It seemed to be inevitable that they should remain at the lonely prairie cabin until the next day, at least, unless Pawnee Bill was abandoned. And that alternative was one which Cody would not consider even for an instant.

In facing this necessity the scout had not underestimated the danger to them all.

He knew that a large body of Comanches were lying in wait in the timber along the creek, only a few miles

distant, and that as soon as night should settle upon the scene they would advance to the attack.

Under cover of the darkness, with the plentiful mesquite and other shrubbery in the vicinity it would be easy for the enemy to approach quite close to the cabin without exposing themselves to the marksmanship of the scouts.

That the redskins would find a way to set fire to the cabin was a contingency which Buffalo Bill had felt certain of all the while.

Indeed, he had not begun to hint at the reluctance that he felt to staying there through the night, knowing that if he did so, Pawnee Bill would insist either upon their leaving him, or upon attempting to accompany them in their flight to safer quarters.

This underground retreat promised to at least give them a place of temporary refuge if the worst should come to worst.

It is not to be supposed, however, that Buffalo Bill foresaw none of the difficulties and dangers which were in store for them. The truth was, the whole situation was one of the most miserably black of any that he had faced.

He pushed on through the passage, which in places was so low that he had to crawl upon hands and knees.

At last he came to a place where it was higher again, and soon after he found the way obstructed by another thin board wall.

Of this he only partially removed a single, narrow section.

Beyond, as he suspected, was the natural gully which had been alluded to.

"If the infernal reds don't get on to this, it will at least give us a chance to get out in case they burn the shanty over our heads. And if the Indians do find it, and undertake to come in after us, we can make it a death trap for them, as well as finding it, possibly, the same kind of a trap for us," he muttered.

Having come to this conclusion, the border king made his way back to the cabin as quickly as possible.

He found that he had spent more time in his exploration than he had supposed, and the brief prairie twilight was already falling.

Buffalo Bill repaired to the outer room, and finding Pawnee Bill awake, he told him of his discovery.

"Why not give me a good supply of provender and water and leave me in that hole, while you and Red Plume get away to a safer place with the girl?" suggested Pawnee Bill.

"It won't do," said Buffalo Bill decisively.

"I'll probably be able to get away myself to-morrow, and the Comanches won't hang around here long when they think the shanty is deserted. Or you can come back after me in a day or two, if I don't turn up when you think it is time for me."

"No, Pawnee, it won't do. Besides, I reckon we'll be about as well off here now as we would be to try for a getaway at this late hour with a horde of Comanches hot on our trail."

"You're contrary as a pig, Bill!" growled Jack.

"I know it, old man. That's why my pards can't get rid of me even if they want to."

"Stay here, then, and let the Comanches roast us all together. The more the merrier—for the redskins."

"And for us, too, if we've got to be roasted. I don't

want to be cooked alone—I want you to stand by and see that it's done right," laughed Buffalo Bill.

And that ended that part of the discussion.

It need not be supposed for a moment that the king of bordermen expected to be beaten by the redskins in this case any more than he had been in the innumerable other encounters which he had had with them when the odds were heavy against him.

His thought was chiefly for the safety of Pawnee Bill, who was almost helpless from the hurt and exhaustion.

Then, there was Bertha Hallam—was she true or false? Did she wish to return to the settlement of Barstow, or not? And why did she allow herself to be used by the Comanches as a decoy while she was a captive among them?

Upon the solution of these puzzles hung Buffalo Bill's interest in her safety.

He was not the sort to be hoodwinked by mere beauty and coquettishness in a girl.

He now returned to the inner room of the cabin and made a shallow grave for the skeleton, wrapped the latter up in blankets and filled in the hole.

Then he disguised the shape and appearance of the grave as much as possible, and lastly removed the partition between that and the larger room.

Red Plume, meanwhile, had spent a greater part of the time outside of the cabin, patrolling the space around it out as far as the gully, and keeping a keen lookout for signs of the Comanches, whom he knew were hidden in the timber.

Silent as the red chief was, he had, nevertheless, reckoned on all the chances that menaced them.

But he was ready to cast his luck with his great chief, White Buffalo. Whatever fate the latter might choose, the faithful Pawnee pard was willing to share it.

Night settled over the prairie like a pall.

Still Red Plume moved noiselessly here and there, eyes and ears alert.

The distant timber line became blotted out in the darkness. The shrubby growth of the prairie lost all semblance to form, and the night wind murmuring through it did not cause any perceptible motion in the darkness.

The sky was overcast sufficiently to blot out the light of the stars.

Red Plume's attention was attracted by a red glow against the horizon.

"Ugh!" he grunted. "Comanche burn paleface cabin. Burn dis cabin heap quick 'fore another sun!"

Just then his ear caught a rustle amid the mesquite.

He dropped to the ground, lay perfectly still for a moment, and then began to crawl out in the direction of the gully.

Suddenly he stopped, and then his lithe form was projected forward, while his hand clasped a knife.

The Pawnee was grappling with a Comanche warrior who seemed to be almost exactly his match in weight and strength.

For a brief period they rolled over and over amid the coarse tangle of shrubbery. Then there was the sound of a knife plunged into flesh—a sound which, once heard, can never be forgotten.

After that the struggle ceased, and after a moment of rest, to recover his breath, the victor in the contest crawled away from the spot.

CHAPTER IX.

IS THE GIRL A TRAITOR?

Sharp as had been the lookout of Red Plume, the border king's Pawnee pard, Buffalo Bill himself had observed that which had escaped the hawklike vision of the Indian.

Having disposed of the skeleton and removed the frail partition in the cabin, the great scout directed his attention to the lookout from each of the four sides of the cabin.

As a light had been lighted inside he did not realize until then that the darkness had become so intense outside.

Before sunset the sky had been almost clear, but now a haze had gathered, like smoke and fog mixed, blotting out the distant landscape completely.

"I don't like it!" he muttered.

"You don't like what, Mr. Cody?"

It was Bertha Hallam who asked the question.

She was standing near him, looking out through the high window over his shoulder.

"I don't like its being so dark," he replied.

"Why not?"

"Because it favors the Comanches. Redskins always put up a cowardly fight, and that is favored by darkness, because it helps them to hide."

"You think they will try to clean us out here, do you?"

"Don't let it worry you, Miss Hallam. A complete clean out has never happened me yet."

"You think you are invincible, Buffalo Bill?"

He looked at her keenly.

Was there a scornful curl to her lips in the smile with which she met his gaze?

He was not sure; but her words had a mocking sound, and he had a feeling that she was not friendly.

Queerly enough, the great scout, with his knowledge of men, white and red, few of whom could deceive him as to their real character, was never sure when it came to judging a woman whom he had not had time to know.

He was inclined to doubt them until he was certain of their reliability.

"I reckon, Miss Hallam, that you don't know what I think," he said, his keen eyes looking steadily into hers. Her glance fell before that penetrating gaze.

"I wish you would tell me what you think."

"That I won't do till I know you better."

"You still believe me a traitor."

"You'll have a chance to prove the contrary before morning, it's likely."

"In what way?"

"The reds are going to press us pretty close here before we see the light of another sun. Then you'll have a chance to show your colors. It may come to our making a flight either with or without you, and you will have to make your choice."

"Very well; I hope you will get proof that will satisfy you. But I don't believe you will."

"Why not?"

"Because you would rather not have faith in me."

Buffalo Bill shrugged his shoulders and smiled, but made no other reply to this speech.

At the same time his gaze caught the flash of a light out on the prairie, in the direction of the creek.

It was not so distant as the timber, however, and the scout saw it move slowly in a circle.

This motion was repeated three times, and then the light was extinguished—or, at any rate, it disappeared from the gaze of Buffalo Bill.

"A signal," was the silent comment of the latter.

At the same time he flashed a quick glance at the face of Bertha Hallam.

He saw that her face was animated by a new excitement, and he instantly decided that she had seen the signal, and that she understood it.

But he did not seem to be observing her, believing that, if she knew the meaning of the signal, she might try to answer it.

This suspicion was strengthened when she went to the cabin door and stepped out.

"Better be careful," the scout cautioned. "The Comanches are likely to be creeping up at any time."

"I will be careful," she replied, and went out.

The girl moved silently halfway around the house, and then drew something from within the blouse which she wore.

A moment later there was a flash of a lucifer match in her hand.

Before she could do more, the match and piece of fuse which she had been about to light were dashed from her hands and she was grasped with a firm, yet gentle hand, lifted from her feet and whisked back into the cabin before she could even have uttered an outcry.

When she was set upon her feet again she found herself again looking into the accusing eyes of the king of bordermen.

Buffalo Bill was smiling.

The strange girl met his gaze for a single instant, and then covered her face with her hands, her form shaking as if she were crying.

The great scout returned to the lookout, and as he did so, the cabin door opened and Red Plume, his Pawnee pard, stalked in.

A glance from the scout was sufficient to see that the Indian had been fighting, for there was blood on his face and hands, and a red spot on his tawny throat where the fingers of his assailant had closed with a grip which was intended to choke out his life.

"How was it, Red Plume?" queried Buffalo Bill.

"Comanche creep up, heap close to cabin. Red Plume meet, slash, slash with knife, get choke, heap good fight. Den Comanche croak—ugh!"

"The Comanche croaked!—that's the best part of the yarn, and I wish it could end it for the night. Did you glimpse any more of them?"

"Me hear um rustle in meskeet, that all. Me go dis side, den that side, way out gully. Heap Comanche all round, creep, creep—bimeby try smash cabin. But White Buffalo shoot heap fast, den all Comanche run like dogs!"

Red Plume had unbounded confidence in the prowess of his paleface partner. But Buffalo Bill well understood that there were limits to the powers of any man, and that he was no exception to the rule.

He felt that in the present situation there were odds to fight against which he had not knowledge of and that he was liable to find himself confronted by a treachery which would throw up the game to the enemy, unless he should exercise greater alertness than he felt himself capable of.

Buffalo Bill believed that the time had come when it was necessary to tell Pawnee Bill of the crisis which was at hand.

He found that he had been asleep for some time, and when he was aroused it was to a sense of greater comfort than he had experienced for many hours.

The feverish symptoms were abating.

"Well," said Pawnee Bill, when the other had explained the situation to him, "I reckon we are in for it at close quarters, and that's a game that I don't think I am good for now. But if I could get up to a level so as to use my rifle I could make a few of the red devils pass in their checks."

"Yes, and there's always your revolvers, if it comes to that. Woe to them if they have to face you with a shooter in both hands."

"But about the retreat under the cabin, Bill?"

"We take to that if they set the shanty afire. Otherwise we stay here."

"Just because you think it will hurt my leg to crawl in there—I see, Bill, that you figure as if I was the only one in the crowd worth saving. And yet there's that young lady——"

"Don't worry about the traitors."

"You count her as one?"

"It looks that way pretty strong. If she explains, all right. If not, she will have to answer to the charge."

"I can't believe it against such a fine-looking girl. And what can be her object——"

"Hist!"

The note of caution was from Buffalo Bill, but it was in response to a sign from Red Plume, who was on the lookout at the moment.

The border king sprang to a loophole and peered out.

"Out with the light!" he ordered, in a low voice.

Bertha Hallam was quicker than Red Plume, and it was she who extinguished the lamp.

The room became enshrouded in the blackest kind of darkness.

But the scouts within were enabled to see every near object outside with greater distinctness than they could with a light within.

Cody saw several dark objects amid the mesquite shrubs at a point only a few yards distant from the cabin.

He kept his eyes fixed upon them for several minutes trying to make sure whether they moved or not.

He had about decided that they were motionless when he observed that one of them seemed to be gliding a little closer within the shelter of the one of the shrubs.

He thrust his rifle through the loophole, and, without seeming to take aim at all, sent the bullet on its way.

Up leaped the object at which he had fired, and a prolonged wail of death quavered on the air.

Simultaneously the other forms which he had been doubtful about began to skurry for cover.

Ping!—rang out another rifle.

It was Red Plume's weapon this time, and one of the swiftly creeping forms came to a halt and did not stir again.

The red scout, correctly judging the position of the head of the Comanche, had sent his shot to the brain, and not even a cry escaped the victim.

"Good, Red Plume!" exclaimed Buffalo Bill.

Unlike their usual habit under such conditions, the other Comanches who had been creeping up to the cabin

did not spring up and make the night hideous with their yells of rage.

They knew that mere yelling would not serve as a bluff to intimidate the inmates of the lonely cabin. And they knew, also, that their only chance of success lay in keeping the position of their own precious bodies hidden from the sight and hearing of the invincible king of the border.

Therefore, in retreating, or otherwise changing their position, they maintained the utmost silence.

The bodies of their dead comrades were permitted to lie where they had fallen.

The redskins, finding that even the darkness and low shrubbery were not sufficient to conceal them from the eyes of their foes in the cabin, were more cautious after this lesson.

For a full hour no demonstration of any kind was made by the enemy.

Yet not for a moment during that whole period was the vigilance of either Buffalo Bill or Red Plume relaxed.

Then they both saw moving figures again creep out from amid the mesquite.

Both fired together, but at different figures.

These paused, but there was no outcry. Others continued to advance.

What did it mean? For both of these great marksmen could not have missed at the same time.

CHAPTER X.

STRATEGY AND STRUGGLE.

Crack! crack! sounded the two rifles again, almost as one.

The two figures at which the weapons were directed paused as the others had done.

But just as these paused, the two which had been fired at before began to move again, with a silent, jerky motion, as if they were hitching along on their haunches.

"A trick, Red Plume!" exclaimed Buffalo Bill.

"Ugh!" grunted the red scout, disgusted to discover that he had been duped into wasting a shot on some dummies.

He did not consider that any one, no matter how shrewd, would have done the same, since there was no means whatever for detecting the living from the inanimate forms which might be set in motion for the purpose of drawing the fire of the marksmen who never missed.

Even now, with every reason to believe that the figures which were hitching along the ground toward the cabin were in reality but dummies which the hidden savages were pulling along by means of ropes, Buffalo Bill was not certain that it would not be acting on the safer side to send a shot at everything that moved, whether he thought there was life in it or not.

He would have done this but for the danger of being left without means for a quick shot at a moment when it might be required to hold back a rush of the foe.

Just then there sounded a sharp crack at the other side of the room, and Cody wheeled with lightning quickness.

It was too dark to see anything, but he knew that Bertha Hallam was there watching the prairie through a loophole.

As the scout sprang across, suspicious as ever of every

move the strange girl might make, he heard a howl of pain outside that came unmistakably from an Indian.

In a moment the hand of Buffalo Bill was on the arm of the Comanche captive.

"You fired a revolver, Miss Hallam?" he asked.

"Yes."

"At a redskin?"

"I think so."

"And hit the mark?"

"Yes."

"So you are trying to prove that you are not a traitor?"

"Just as you choose to believe."

"Well, I shall suspend judgment until the proof is stronger yet, Miss Hallam."

"Oh, you needn't have faith in me if you would rather not, Colonel Cody! It really makes not the least difference in the world to me."

"That sounds as if she was quite a girl, after all," was the mental comment of the great scout as he returned to his own lookout to give a direction to Red Plume.

He went back to the side of Miss Hallam again a moment later and scanned the prairie on that side of the cabin.

There the mesquite grew more thickly than on the other side of the cabin, and afforded better shelter for the Indians who might try to creep up close to the structure.

"Where was the Indian that you shot, Miss Hallam?" Cody asked, in a low voice.

"Straight ahead, where you see the mesquite the densest."

"If you hadn't hit him he wouldn't have yelled."

"I think I killed him. He fell, and I couldn't see that he got up again."

"Then he was standing when you fired?"

"No. He was crawling toward the cabin, and leaped up, then fell, as I fired."

"Good. Not many could do as well as that with that kind of a weapon, in such a light. With a rifle it is an easier matter."

"It is not the first practice of the kind that I ever had."

"Ah! now we're in for it on all sides. You may show your loyalty now, my girl, and I'll believe in you!"

The low, earnest tones of the great scout could not have failed to impress Bertha Hallam, as they did everybody else upon whom he might try their magnetism.

"I'll show my loyalty," she whispered.

And to prove it, her revolver began to bark through one of the loopholes at the line of redskins which rose to view at that instant within a dozen feet of the cabin.

There was not time for many shots before the foe had reached the wall of the shanty, for they came on with a rush.

Buffalo Bill emptied his rifle, pulled a revolver, and at the same time he heard the sputter of Red Plume's revolver on the other side of the cabin, and knew that the savages were attacking all sides at once.

The range was too close altogether.

In a moment the foe were so close up to the walls that they could not be seen at all from the loopholes.

But they had not gained the goal without paying a big price for it. More than half a dozen had been seen to dance the death jig while their comrades, bending low, scooted straight for the shadow of the cabin.

The Comanches had not fired a shot up to this time.

There would have been no use in their doing so, for there would have been small chance of getting one through to one of the inmates of the shanty.

They had another scheme, as Buffalo Bill well understood, and they began to work it with a vengeance.

A half dozen began to batter at the door with their hatchets. So swift and heavy were their blows that, at that rate, not many minutes would be needed for them to demolish the door entirely.

It was provided with one loophole, and Buffalo Bill had a revolver squirting fire through that into the stomachs of the assailants before they had time to reckon on what might be happening to them.

That was something that they could not stand for, and the door had a rest from their blows immediately.

But there were plenty of places along the outer walls of the cabin where there was no danger of getting in range of that terrible fire from the scouts within.

Those points came in for an assault that threatened to batter openings through them in short order.

Yet, being built of logs, there was not a likelihood that openings large enough to admit the bodies of the redskins could be made for some time.

They soon had proof that the little garrison of the lone cabin was game to the last ounce.

At one spot, where the attack on the wall seemed to have been concentrated with the greatest force, a small opening was soon made between the logs.

Buffalo Bill was at the spot, however, and he saw the first splinter that fell through on the inner side.

At the next blow the blade of the hatchet showed itself to the scout.

The instant it was withdrawn a freshly filled cylinder of one of the scout's revolvers began to vomit warm lead through the aperture.

The howls from the other side testified to the effect, and the attack at that spot ceased immediately.

The Comanches realized then that there were too many openings in the walls of the cabin for their own safety already, and they showed no more anxiety to increase the number of them.

The great scout leaped from point to point along the sides of the cabin, with a tireless and relentless rapidity that made him truly a host in himself.

Red Plume was trying his best to match the record of his paleface friend and ideal of hero. And it was great work that the Pawnee was doing.

As for Bertha Hallam, she was by no means idle, and Buffalo Bill found opportunity, in spite of his own restless activity, to make sure that she was not playing a bluff game merely.

That she had fired several effective shots at the enemy he had the best of proof.

But there was no time then to say anything about it, nor did her seeming loyalty at that time explain away the double play which had characterized her behavior earlier.

It was in the nature of the king of bordermen to trust to fair appearances until that trust was in some degree betrayed or shaken.

Then he was not overready to accept testimony on the other side.

In other words, his confidence was not easily lost, but once forfeited, it was difficult to regain.

Having blocked the attempt to cut a hole through the door, and the other to make an opening through

the cabin wall, Buffalo Bill was prepared to meet the next moves of the enemy, which he knew they were bound to make.

He had no means of judging their number, but the very confidence with which they pressed their attack showed that they had enough warriors to make them not daunted by losses.

Indeed, it looked very much as if they had come hither with a war party especially prepared to forever rid themselves of the scouts, who, of all the paleface foes whom they had to fear, they counted the most formidable.

This was what Buffalo Bill suspected, and the realization that he was the target of an elaborately planned expedition, backed by a redskinned tribe which was, in some respects, the most to be feared of any that then roamed the border, made him all the more alert and determined in the kind of a defense which he felt bound to put up.

The savages continued their hammering on the walls of the cabin at various points, but the scouts knew that it was being done merely to hold their attention.

If one scheme had to be abandoned, there was another ready, planned and waiting to be acted on.

As Cody sprang from loophole to loophole, he heard the thunderous report of a rifle, which seemed to have been discharged within the cabin.

The spurt of fire from the muzzle, momentarily lighting the interior, told whence it came.

A redskin had thrust his rifle in through one of the loopholes, and, although he could not see any of the inmates, he had hazarded a shot. It was not the last attempt of the kind.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WARMEST WORK OF ALL.

The bullet from the Comanche's rifle thudded in the opposite wall of the cabin within a foot of the spot where Bertha Hallam was standing.

The glare from the discharge showed Buffalo Bill its direction, and at first he feared that the girl might have been hit, for he could see that she stood almost within range.

He sprang to her side and laid a firm hand on her arm.

"You must keep close to the ground at the side of Pawnee Bill, out of range of the loopholes," he said, in a low voice of command.

"I shall do my part in the defense, as far as my poor skill will allow," replied the girl.

"There is little that you can do when you cannot get a glimpse of the enemy, miss."

"I can keep on the lookout, and report to you if I see the beginning of any new mischief, as I did before."

"True—you have done well—and I may have to ask your pardon yet—"

"Don't do it, Buffalo Bill, for I won't grant the pardon. That isn't what I'm after—it is of no account to me. I merely wish to vindicate myself."

The king of the border, for a moment, did not feel like a king of anything.

It was one of those times when a girl with a ready wit and the spirit to make use of it, used her power to make a great man feel as if he had played a small part.

Cody was human, and for the moment he came near to forgetting that there might be a hundred Comanches on the other side of the cabin walls expressly after his blood.

For the first time he really wished to make peace with this girl, who, as the Comanche captive, he had started out with Red Plume to rescue.

There had been ample reason for his distrust of her, and she knew it. But at that moment he forgot the fact in the feeling that she was showing up as an uncommonly brave and resourceful girl.

He wanted her to know that he was ready to bespeak a full confidence in her. Yet she refused to let him apologize.

That, to a man who was a natural-born gentleman, with the greatest of chivalrous instincts, was a tough blow, and there is no use denying that Colonel Cody felt it sorely for the time.

But he did not have much time to think about it then.

The time was to come, and that before very long, when something better than an apology would be given and accepted.

The scout would have given a great deal then if he could have safely lighted his pocket lantern.

He felt that a rifle might be sticking through any one of the unguarded loopholes at any moment, and there was no telling what mischief might be done by a chance shot at such a close range.

At the very moment when he was thinking of this another vivid jet of flame spurted into the room.

The spurt of the bullet in the log wall within an inch of Cody's hip told him that it was luck, and not his own wit, that could save him in that sort of a play.

But he did not stop then to think about it.

Even while the atmosphere was still quivering with the roar of the discharge, which was thunderous in the small, close room, Buffalo Bill made a leap for the loophole where he had glimpsed the muzzle of the Comanche's rifle.

His hand fell upon it just as it was being withdrawn.

He clung to it like grim death, bringing the other hand to help.

The redskin, feeling the resistance, uttered a grunt and began to lay out his strength.

He had the better hold, since a stronger grip could be had on the breech than on the muzzle of the weapon.

But Buffalo Bill was as strong as two of the redskins, and the rate at which the scout pulled, twisted, and pumped at his end of the weapon kept the Comanche guessing for a few busy moments.

The scout gained upon it rapidly, and soon more than half the length of the weapon was in the room, and this gave Buffalo Bill the better hold.

At that juncture, knowing pretty well the position of the Comanche, the scout abruptly stopped pulling, and reversed the movement, giving a violent shove to the gun instead.

A yell, and the sound of a heavy fall on the ground outside, told of the result.

The Comanche had received his end of the weapon squarely in the stomach with a force that sent him over on his back, howling with pain.

Before he felt like returning to the tussle the scout had drawn the gun back to the breech, and then, as he could not pull it through the loophole, he gave it a wrench sideways that broke it short off.

Then he pushed the stub of the rifle out, and the muzzle of his own was thrust through in place of it.

As the scout glanced through the loophole he saw the Indian with whom he had just been tussling in the act of getting up from the spot where he had fallen.

The spiteful crack—the dying yell—the spasmodic leap—and the tale was told.

Meanwhile Bertha Hallam was doing something effective in the way of protecting the interior of the cabin from further attempts to shoot the inmates from the outside through the loopholes.

Although she could not see the Indians, who now kept close up to the walls on the outside, she ran from one loophole to another with her revolver, firing a shot through each.

This she kept up, without hurrying, but shifting from side to side of the cabin, so that it would not have been safe for a Comanche to attempt to make use of any of the openings.

It was an effectual ruse, and put an end to one phase of their danger.

It is needless to say that Buffalo Bill observed and appreciated the part she was playing. But he could not say a word then. She had as good as forbidden it.

Meanwhile, if there ever lived a restless and miserable man who was not to blame for his situation, Pawnee Bill was that individual.

Here they were shooting redskins just as they pleased, and he could not have even a single pop at one. And who enjoyed making the hostile Comanches scurry for cover better than did this same Pawnee Bill?

Buffalo Bill could hear him growling and execrating over his own helplessness, and Cody understood just how he felt.

Once Pawnee Bill sprang up and yanked a revolver from his holster. But before he could get to a lookout his ankle gave a twist that made him sweat in the same old way, and he flung himself down on the pallet again.

He was getting better, and he knew it, and he knew, also, that it was because he had been obeying the orders of his wise friend, Colonel Cody.

He knew that a few hours more of the same kind of obedience would reduce the sprain to bearable limits, and that then he would be able to take a hand in using up what remnant of the Comanches that Buffalo Bill and Red Plume might see fit to leave for him to practice on.

The racket outside gradually diminished, until it almost ceased. This did not argue that the Comanches had given up their attempt.

Buffalo Bill knew, in fact, that not a single warrior had left the neighborhood of the cabin. All were huddled close up to the walls—unless otherwise engaged.

The inmates were not long kept in doubt about the next move of the enemy.

A few of the Comanches were provided with muzzle-loading rifles, although the most of them had breech loaders.

Buffalo Bill heard a faint sound near the base of the cabin wall at a point midway between two loopholes, where the Indians could not be observed from within unless they got two or three yards away from the cabin.

The sounds indicated that they were digging under the cabin wall. This was easy to do, and nothing could be done by the scouts to block the trick.

They could only wait to see what the Comanches would do after the first part of their trick was worked out.

The sound of digging presently ceased, and then there were other sounds, of a less definite character. These finally ceased, and then there was an interval of almost absolute silence.

"What next, Mr. Cody?"

It was the voice of Bertha Hallam, and she was close at the side of the scout.

"It is hard to say, but I reckon we'll soon know. Keep out this way—they've been digging close under that side."

She stepped back in obedience to his request, and as she did so there was a dull explosion, and a sheet of flame shot up from the base of the cabin wall!

CHAPTER XII.

DRIVEN FROM THE CABIN.

"As I half suspected!" exclaimed the border king, as the glare and smudge from the explosion filled the room.

Bertha Hallam, in obedience to his command, had leaped back from the point of danger, and none too soon.

A low cry escaped her as she realized that she had escaped some painful burns, at least, through the timely warning of the man with whom she had seemed to prefer to quarrel.

The Indians had dug a small space under the wall of the hut and dumped into it the contents of their powder horns.

On top of the powder they had thrown a mass of dried grass and roots gathered close to the cabin. Then they ignited the collection of combustibles.

The explosion was not heavy enough to do any great harm, but it started a swifter fire, and opened a space into the cabin, to afford the flames a better draft.

There was a small quantity of water in the cabin, and the scouts dared not use a drop of that for fear that it should be needed for drinking, as, in case of a siege, it might be some time before they should have a chance to replenish the supply.

Buffalo Bill seized the spade and began throwing earth against the burning timber like mad.

This was effectual in extinguishing the flames on the inside of the cabin. But it had already obtained a hold on the outside, which, of course, could not be reached in that manner.

The sounds of the crackling flames, as they began to eat eagerly into the dry timbers, came to the ears of the inmates of the cabin like a knell of doom.

As yet Buffalo Bill had informed no one except Pawnee Bill of the underground passage, which at least promised to afford them temporary protection.

Now he spoke to the scout.

"I reckon we've got to take to the burrow after all," he said.

"Just on my account," growled Pawnee Bill. "If I wasn't here and done up in this infernal shape you'd make a rush into the thick of that crowd, shoot half of 'em before they had a chance to guess what was happening to 'em, and then make a break for the timber—and you'd get there."

"Probably. But that is supposing a case different from

the one we have got to face, and there's no use of talking about it."

"Where are your horses, Bill?"

"Staked outside, near the cabin."

"The redskins will run 'em off."

"They haven't done it yet, and they can't while we're in the cabin; for we'd get a sure shot at the first Comanche that tried the game."

"But if we take to the hole in the ground, what will there be then to hinder them from taking the animals?"

"Nothing. They'll do it, likely."

"And leave us in a pretty situation."

"That can't be helped. We have got to face the music, no matter what tune they play."

"As for the horses, they are of no account unless we get through the racket. And if we do get through, I'll agree to get every one of them back. The Comanches know a good horse when they see one, and they'll be sure to take good care of mine. So we won't worry about that."

"Well, into the hole we go, I suppose."

Buffalo Bill communicated the decision to Red Plume and Bertha, and at the same time explained to them the situation of the retreat which he had discovered under the wall of the cabin.

The Pawnee showed more reluctance to the idea of resorting to the underground passage for safety than he ever had done to any suggestion made by Buffalo Bill, in whom he usually appeared to have perfect confidence.

"Heap like be buried first, den killed!" was his comment.

"If that is what it should come to, it would make no difference to us in the end, Red Plume."

"Me heap rather die odder way, den be buried."

"All right—I reckon the first part of the program will be attended to by the Comanches all right if you stay here. Only you're likely to have to take your choice between roasting and being shot."

"Ugh!"

"That ended that part of the discussion, as far as the Pawnee was concerned.

He would not say what he would do. But after Buffalo Bill had helped Pawnee Bill to crawl down into the retreat, and Bertha Hallam had followed, Red Plume waited sullenly for Buffalo Bill to descend.

The scout held out his hand.

"Good-by, Red Plume, if you aren't going with us," said the border king, as soberly as if he meant it.

By this time the cabin was so completely wrapped in flames that it was becoming suffocating hot and close inside.

"Ugh! me go where White Buffalo go," said the Pawnee. "Him die in hole, Red Plume die there, too. Come!"

And the chief led the way into the retreat.

By using care, Pawnee Bill was now able to get about more comfortably than he had done at any time before since receiving his injury.

Buffalo Bill carried all the implements for digging which he had found in the cabin into the passage. There was a possibility that they might have need of these.

The small supply of water, food, blankets, and saddles were also taken into the retreat.

By the time the last visit was made to the cabin it was so hot that one could not have endured it long.

The lantern and supply of oil was also taken along.

and as there was no danger from that source in that place, they were able to relieve the darkness with the lighted lamp.

"The roof and walls of the cabin will fall in inside of ten minutes," said Buffalo Bill, when he came down from the opening to their retreat for the last time.

"And then we can't get out in that direction," said Pawnee Bill.

"Not for a number of hours. But there are two sides to that idea."

"You mean that the redskins can't get to us from that way either?"

"That's it."

"About this time they must be looking for us to make a dash out of the shanty."

"That is what they're looking for."

"And when they find we don't show ourselves, and the cabin falls in a mass of coals, do you reckon they'll think we're buried in the ruins?"

"I reckon it'll puzzle them some."

"They had an idea that the cabin was haunted, anyhow, and this is the first time they have ventured to get so nigh it after sundown. At least they didn't venture when I was here alone last night."

"This may make them all the more certain that there is something supernatural in charge of the outfit. Yet I have an idea that they won't stay fooled on that score a great while. There must be some good reason for their being bolder to-night than they were when you were here alone twenty-four hours ago."

"I've been figuring on that myself," said Pawnee Bill. "But I can't seem to make head or tail of the puzzle."

The two great scouts were speaking in a low tone, and Bertha Hallam was not near enough at the moment to hear what they were saying.

As Pawnee Bill made the last-quoted remark he glanced toward the girl.

"And maybe ~~you~~ connect her with it?" queried the king of bordermen.

"I thought of it. But I don't see how she can make any difference. That girl's actions, and her talk, too, are all a muddle to me. But I'm blamed if I like to think she is ready to play the traitor."

"She won't play the traitor, Gordon."

"You wasn't so sure a little while ago."

"She has been doing her full share toward defending the cabin against the Comanches, and she wouldn't shoot them down the way she has just for a bluff. That isn't all—she is a good deal more of a girl than we thought at first."

"Maybe you don't know what I thought, Bill," grinned Pawnee Bill.

"The idea is, from the beginning of the attack to-night it has looked to me that there was something more than Comanche scheming and strategy behind it all."

"What do you mean?"

"That the redskins are being put up to a part of it, and their nerves braced by a white leader. Somebody, too, that is blooming anxious to do up you and me, Gordon."

The other reflected a moment in silence.

Then he said, with a nod:

"Yes, there's whiteskin scheming behind the redskin persistence in this raid."

"And I don't mind saying that I think the girl yonder knows something about it, though I don't think now that she is mixed up in it against us."

"How is that?"

"Did you know that she tried to signal to some one out in the direction of the timber before the fight began?"

"Did she?" exclaimed Pawnee Bill incredulously.

"And I caught her in the act and blocked it."

And Buffalo Bill told of the incident as it has been already detailed to the reader.

"And didn't you ask her to explain?" demanded Pawnee Bill.

"No."

"And she offered no explanation?"

"Not a word."

"I don't see, Bill, in the face of that, how you can feel so certain that she is innocent of treachery."

"Wait and see. Really, Gordon, I wouldn't be afraid to trust my life to her, in spite of all the signs."

"If it was anybody but Bill Cody," muttered Pawnee Bill, "I should say that he was girl-struck! But it can't be that. Buffalo Bill always keeps his head."

At this moment there came to their ears the sound of a dull crash at the mouth of the excavation, followed by the muffled sounds of Indian yells.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIGHT IN THE GULLY.

"The cabin is down," exclaimed Buffalo Bill. "And now is our time to make for the other exit of this passage. This is a mighty poor place to be housed a great while."

"I can get there somehow, and I reckon I can sit a saddle if I have a chance," said Pawnee Bill.

Buffalo Bill, helping the injured scout, led the way along the passage.

Bertha Hallam followed close behind them, and Red Plume, pleased over the prospect of a speedy exit from the underground retreat, brought up the rear.

It was a walking and crawling trip, and a slow one. When they reached a point which was as comfortable as any for a halt, and only a little way from the exit, Buffalo Bill said:

"Now I will go ahead and see if there is a chance of getting away from the gully. It'll call for some strategy."

to get hold of the horses, but I reckon it can be managed if we can only have a chance to use them."

"Be mighty careful of yourself, Bill," cautioned Pawnee Bill.

"You talk like an old grandmother, Gordon. I shan't make the strike for horses until I have been back to report on the conditions."

The border king went ahead, and was about to remove a section of the planking which closed the mouth of the passage, when he felt a light touch on his arm.

His pocket lantern was lighted, and the faint gleam from it fell on the pretty face of Bertha Hallam.

"I have something to tell you, Mr. Cody," she said, in a low voice.

Her tones were full of suppressed excitement, and he thought that she was about to confess the reasons for her singular conduct. But in that he was disappointed.

Yet what she had to say was full of interest and importance.

"If you know that you have to deal with Indians I suppose you make different calculations from those which you would use in dealing with enemies of your own race?" she asked.

"Most certainly."

"The Indians have the name of being the most cunning and crafty of any race in the world, I believe?"

"That is the reputation they have."

"Do you believe it is so?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, do you not think that there are many of your own race who are more crafty and dangerous as secret foes than the most crafty of the red race ever were?"

"I know it. Not that the redskins can't beat us in a certain sort of small cunning—they can, until we get used to their tricks. But when a gang of Indians have a white renegade to put them up to deviltry, it is always of a tougher sort to deal with than any that they would ever hatch out in their own brains."

Bertha Hallam was silent for a moment, and, looking into her face, Buffalo Bill could see that she was very pale.

"That is what I thought," she said, in a faint voice. "And so I wished to say that—that—the craft of a white enemy is helping the Comanches in their fight against you and your partners to-night!"

"Heaven forgive me if I have done wrong! But I could not let it go in this way! Both you and Pawnee Bill are great and true men."

The girl would have turned and hurried back to the others, but the hand of Buffalo Bill detained her

"Wait!" he commanded.

"No, no! I can tell you no more!"

"You know the one, then, who is at the head of that

crew of Comanches who are so bitter against Pawnee Bill and me?"

"Don't ask me, I say."

"But you have told me so much now that it is better that we know the rest."

"I have told all I can."

"You know this renegade leader of the Comanches. It was to him that you were going to signal to-night when I stopped you?"

"Ask me no more, Mr. Cody. Can't you see that it is hard—hard for me to say anything about it?"

"Very well. What you have revealed is important. Before another sunset this renegade shall give an account of himself—I will know who he is, and he shall be made to answer for the part he has played."

"Oh, Heaven! what have I done?"

The strange girl broke away from the light grasp of the border king and hurried back to where Pawnee Bill reclined upon a blanket which had been thrown down on the ground.

The moment that she appeared Red Plume went ahead and joined Buffalo Bill at the mouth of the excavation.

In silence the white scout and his Pawnee pard passed cautiously out into the gully.

The latter seemed to be deserted. It was as still as death.

There, below the prairie level, even the sighing of the night wind through the shrubbery could not be heard.

The yells of the Indians, which had been raised in such a disagreeable chorus when the cabin fell, were now silenced.

The unknown renegade, whoever he might be, knew how to control his savage followers, and prevent them from giving away, through their loud outcries, the position or intentions of the moment.

Buffalo Bill and his Pawnee pard followed along the gully for a short distance, and then made their way up to the surface of the prairie.

From the point where they ascended to the upper level they could see the glow of the fallen timbers of the cabin.

They could also see the Comanches, who were gathered close to the spot. And there were fully fifty of them, some moving to and fro, others peering with eager curiosity into the ruins, as if they expected there to see the remains of their paleface enemies.

They could also see their horses—those belonging to Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill.

The animals were still staked out a little way from where the cabin had stood, and it was evident that they had not been molested by the redskins.

This was not all.

Only a short distance from the gully, and between

the latter point and the cabin, were the horses of a number of the Comanches.

Buffalo Bill and his companion had time to note all these particulars before they saw something else, which engaged all their attention for the time.

One of the Indians suddenly separated from them, and, after making a complete circuit of the cabin ruins, came back and spoke to them in a tone so loud that it reached the ears of the red and white scouts with considerable distinctness.

The words spoken were in the Comanche tongue, and while Buffalo Bill caught only a few isolated syllables, these were of a significance that enchain'd his attention as nothing else could have done.

While the words were too disconnected to quote here, the meaning behind them, as there was not room to doubt, was this:

The speaker, who was unmistakably a white renegade in Indian disguise, knew something of the cabin which had just been leveled by fire.

He had known the former inmate, who had been a brother renegade, hunted for his life.

The name of the hermit occupant had been Bruce Barnett, and having become ill, while still a fugitive from justice, and unable to rough it like the one who was briefly telling the story, he resorted to the lonely cabin on the prairie.

He had also dug a way of escape underneath the cabin, and having given the place the reputation of being haunted, he had succeeded in eluding pursuit.

The speaker knew only that the man had probably died alone in the cabin, which, on account of its reputation and its distance from frequented ways, had not been visited since the death of the hermit occupant.

It was to this effect that the teller of the story explained to the Indians the mystery which had made them afraid to approach the cabin, which they had thought to be "haunted."

So, in a most unexpected manner, Buffalo Bill learned the explanation of the mystery.

But this was not the whole significance of the broken sentences that came to the ears of the scout, as spoken by the white renegade leader of the Indians.

The part most important in its bearing on their present situation was this:

In mentioning the underground retreat partly natural and in part excavated by the recluse, the renegade had explained away what the Indians might otherwise have regarded as a supernatural mystery.

It told them that the fugitives had discovered the other way of escape from the cabin, and that was why they had not been driven out of the cabin when the latter was burned.

One point more was dropped by the wily renegade.

The inmates of the hut had unmistakably retreated to the hole in the ground, and the latter communicated with the gully by an old channel.

This last piece of information gave away to the Comanches the only secret upon which our friend had to depend for a hope of escape without discovery.

"Did you hear, Red Plume?" Buffalo Bill asked, in a whisper.

"Yes, me hear."

"Then the fight is on now. See, the redskins are making in this direction already."

"We'll have to face the odds right here, and I'm blamed if it doesn't look as if we might have to die like dogs in a ditch."

"We fight here," said the Pawnee grimly. And the simple words meant the deepest defiance to the horde of Comanches who were even then making for the gully at a run.

It would have been by no means impossible for the two scouts to make a break for the horses of the Comanches, some of which were staked out close at hand, to have mounted, and by keeping up a swift and deadly back fire at their pursuers, made their retreat to the timber.

But with Pawnee Bill and Bertha Hallam helpless in the underground channel, this was out of the question.

It is but justice to the Pawnee to say that he did not consider the possibility of deserting the defenseless ones any more than did Buffalo Bill—and it certainly did not occur to the latter.

At the moment they were a number of yards from the opening to the retreat.

"We will start the game," muttered the great scout. "And let them end it if they can."

There was an irregular ridge of earth and rocks which they could use as a temporary barricade.

Shielded by this, crouching side by side on the edge of the gully, Buffalo Bill and Red Plume started the tune with their rifles, and followed with a rapid chorus from their revolvers—one in each hand, and four in all.

Red Plume knew how. His marksmanship did not equal that of his white pard; but with the background of red glow from the dying fire they sent a storm of lead into the Comanche silhouettes outlined against the reddish light.

CHAPTER XIV.

BERTHA HALLAM, THE BRAVE.

Buffalo Bill was wise in taking the offensive, for fully half a dozen of the Indians were hurled to the ground to rise no more by the sputter of shots from the gully.

It was something wholly unexpected by the Comanches, and a surprise of that sort to the Indians always throws them into a panic.

Had they acted with their usual precautions they might have saved themselves any further loss at the moment by throwing themselves flat among the mesquite.

But this they did not think to do until three more had been made to bite the dust by shots in the back from the revolvers of Buffalo Bill and the Pawnee.

The Indians had tried to escape death by flight back toward the cabin, and they did not even think to get out of line with the glow from the fire.

But there was a cooler head among them—that of the renegade leader.

He was not overanxious to lead in his own person when there was a chance of being under fire. But he had the head to plan for the Comanches.

A command was yelled at them from the renegade, and in response every warrior of them flung himself flat upon the ground.

So they were blotted from the sight of Buffalo Bill and Red Plume as completely as though the earth had swallowed them.

But the two scouts did not think for an instant that the advance of the enemy was stopped. For that matter, it was only checked in the way of speed, for the Indians kept straight on toward the gully, crawling close to the ground and shielded by the shrubbery and the darkness that prevailed everywhere except within the narrow radius illumined by the burning cabin.

"Now it is at closer quarters, unless we go back to the retreat. And once in there, now that they know where we are, and the location of both the ways out, we will be like rats in a trap.

"They can keep us there until we are starved out by having two or three stationed at each end ready to shoot us as soon as we stick our heads out of the hole."

"Me rather fight 'em here," decided Red Plume.

This had been the decision of Buffalo Bill in the first place, although it was better that Pawnee Bill remain in the retreat, since he could not take a very active part in the defense.

He could not run a step, and if there had been a horse close at hand it was doubtful if he could have mounted without help.

As for Bertha, it would seem better that she remain under cover also, as it was unreasonable to expect that she could make the same kind of a fight in the open that the great scout and his Pawnee pard could put up.

The decision made, the two scouts acted with a coolness of judgment which left no room for mistakes.

The position behind the natural intrenchment was as good as any that could be chosen at that point.

They could no longer see the foe, but they knew that the latter were creeping toward them in overwhelming numbers.

As the ridge extended along the edge of the gully for

a considerable distance, the scouts glided silently to one side for a space of about a dozen feet.

This was so that the Indians would not know so exactly where to look for them.

It was well that they did this.

When the Comanches were within a few yards of the spot where the scouts had been when they did the fatal shooting, the Indians raised themselves sufficiently to pour a volley from their rifles straight at the spot where they believed Buffalo Bill and his pard to be crouching.

Although the latter had been well shielded by the ridge, yet at that range the chances were that they might have been nipped by some of the bullets which were poured in at the spot in such a shower.

As it was, only silence followed the volley from the rifles of the Comanches.

The Indians paused and listened, and our friends could hear their guttural comments.

It was evident that they believed that the scouts had retreated back to the underground channel.

This decision seemed to be confirmed as they continued to advance, and no demonstration from their enemies greeted them.

The line of Comanches got almost up to the ridge behind which lay the gully.

There they paused briefly, and then, not hearing anything of the enemy, they raised themselves to peer over the ridge.

They were so close to our friends that the latter could see them with sufficient distinctness in spite of the darkness.

They had refilled the chambers of their revolvers, and the next instant the weapons began to spit out their loads into the very faces of the red foe.

This was the worst surprise yet for the Comanches, for they tumbled over like pins in a bowling alley.

The orders from their renegade leader to refrain from yelling were forgotten, and the chorus of howls that they sent up were a weird accompaniment to the sputter of the revolvers.

The firing of the weapons was so rapid that, to the excited fancy of the Indians, there were a dozen, instead of two, crouching behind the ridge.

They fell back pell-mell, yelling, squabbling with each other, scrambling through the shrubbery, making such a row generally that Buffalo Bill and Red Plume had no trouble in locating every living man of them, and planting the leaden pellets where they would do the most good.

It was a royal fight, and so far as that part of it went, there was but one side to it worth telling of.

Had it not been for the white renegade leader, indeed, this would have probably ended the trouble of our friends until they could have had a chance to get horses and escape from the locality altogether.

But, as Buffalo Bill had said to Bertha Hallam, a white enemy of a determined character was more to be feared than the craftiest of red foes.

While the remnant of the bunch of Comanches, who had been in the van of the advance, fell back in yelling and scrambling disorder, the renegade, taking good care to keep his own precious person out of range of those terrible marksmen, advanced so as to rally the redskins.

Otherwise the latter might have taken to their horses and fled from the spot altogether. Indeed, they had suffered such losses already that they had little heart to continue the fight against opponents who seemed to be invincible.

Besides, they believed that their enemies had been reinforced from some quarter.

But the renegade, cool and observing, had been convinced by the sound of the shots that the firing had been done by two pairs of hands only, with a revolver in each hand.

He had heard that kind of shooting before, and knew the peculiar sound of it.

"Is it over, Red Plume?" breathed Buffalo Bill, as he pumped the shells out of the cylinders of his weapons and filled them again with that rapidity which only an experienced hand, under such pressure of need, knows how to do.

"Ugh! 'fraid not," was the brief answer.

"We've got a white leader in the crowd to reckon with, and that's why."

Red Plume grunted his assent again.

The hotter a fight, and the bigger the execution he had made in the ranks of his foes, the less he had to say.

Buffalo Bill was convinced that the Comanches would be induced to advance again, and that some means would be used by the redskins to make the deadly enemy visible.

He also believed that whatever was done would be executed at once, the better to give the scouts no chance to hatch up a new scheme for defense or escape.

It had come to a bitter fight to the death, and Cody had no doubt about it.

He knew that Pawnee Bill must be fretting over the situation all the while, and there was a chance that the reckless fellow would crawl out into the gully to see what was doing and lend a hand.

But there seemed to be no chance for Cody and his companion to return to the retreat to apprise the inmates of the situation.

Our friends had not long to wait before they were to know the next move of the enemy.

A silence like death continued for a quarter of an hour.

Then, at the bottom of the gully, at a point only a

few yards from the ridge where the two scouts were crouching, a bright flame suddenly burst forth.

The Indians had prepared a bonfire, and lighted it with powder, so that it should become light all around the spot without warning.

This was to reveal the hiding place of the scouts, and to allow them no chance to seek another before they should be exposed to the fire of the Comanche marksmen.

The scheme was the combined product of white and redskin craft. It could hardly have been entirely thwarted, even if foreseen.

The instant the light flared in the gully several shots snapped from the other side, where some of the Indians were awaiting the chance.

A faint groan escaped the lips of the brave Pawnee, and he fell back and rolled to the bottom of the hollow.

The sight and sound of the mishap to his friend struck almost like lead to the heart of Buffalo Bill.

The latter wheeled, and without heeding the banging of rifles and spouting of flame, plunged straight for the spot whence the shot at Red Plume had proceeded.

The sting of more than one bullet told Buffalo Bill that they were nipping him hard. Yet he did not halt nor falter.

He reached a ridge, plunged over it, reached for a bearded throat, and bore the renegade back onto the ground.

At the same instant he felt a cold muzzle pressed against his neck.

Bang! but from another weapon. At the same time he plunged a knife to the hilt in the renegade's breast.

Then he turned to meet the eyes of Bertha Hallam.

A dead Comanche lay at her feet. She had saved the life of the king of bordermen!

CHAPTER XV.

THE SILENCE EXPLAINED.

Buffalo Bill knew what the girl had done without asking a question, for he had felt the redskin's revolver pressing against his neck just as he was in the act of killing the renegade.

A second more and the bullet from the Comanche would have severed his jugular.

That Bertha Hallam, hearing the sounds of strife, had come out into the gully, of course the scout had no means of knowing until then.

As it chanced, she was not far from the spot where the renegade was hiding when he had fired at Red Plume.

Therefore she had been close at hand when the great scout had come plunging across the gully with the foe spitting lead in his very face, bent upon vengeance for the killing of Red Plume—for it did not occur to Buffalo Bill that his beloved red pard might yet be alive.

Then, as the scout pounced upon the renegade, and so had his hands full, Bertha saw a Comanche leap toward him, and thrust his revolver against Buffalo Bill's throat.

She, too, had a weapon of the same kind, and it was then that hers spoke—and the scout's life was saved, even as that of the renegade was extinguished like a candle.

The moment it was over, and Buffalo Bill looked into her face, the girl sank down, weak and faint.

The scout seized her hand, bent toward her, and pressed his lips to hers—a mark of feeling that the great borderman had shown to but few women in his life.

Hardly a word was spoken then. But there was no doubt left in the heart of Bertha Hallam that Buffalo Bill had dropped the last shadow of distrust that he might have entertained against her.

Pawnee Bill, too, as his friend had feared, could not restrain himself longer from going out to take a hand in the battle, sounds of which came to his ears in the underground channel.

He crawled along the bottom of the gully, dragging his rifle, and when the blaze kindled by the Indians flared up, he crouched behind a hummock and began popping at every sign of a Comanche that showed itself in the vicinity.

His efforts were not all wasted, either, and they led the Indians to believe that they had been correct in their suspicion that Buffalo Bill had received reinforcements.

The Comanches were not long in discovering that their renegade leader had gone the way that so many of their own comrades had taken, and this disheartened them.

They kept up a bluff of trying to wipe out their dreaded foe for only a short time.

Then they scampered away through the grass and mesquite back to where their horses were staked.

These they drove before them for some distance without mounting, keeping themselves hidden, so much did they dread showing themselves a mark for the rifles of Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill.

As soon as it became certain that the Comanches had given up the fight, Buffalo Bill went to examine the body of Red Plume.

To his unspeakable delight, he found that the Pawnee was living, and, although his wound, in the shoulder, was a painful one, prompt attention, such as the scout was able to give to it, would prevent its being dangerous.

When Cody had finished dressing the wound of the Pawnee by the light of his lantern, with Pawnee Bill near to lend a hand, he looked about them to see what had become of Bertha Hallam.

He found her bending over the dead renegade, gazing into the man's bearded, yet handsome face.

As Buffalo Bill approached, she dashed the tears from her eyes and looked up into the noble face of the scout.

"Now you shall know all the truth, Mr. Cody!" she exclaimed.

"Tell me nothing, Miss Bertha, that you would rather keep back," said the scout kindly.

"I will put it into few words," she said. "And only to one that I count a friend in the highest sense of the terms could I speak of the matter at all.

"This man was Merle Morton, once honored as the son of a wealthy ranchman.

"This was not many years ago, either. It was then that he professed to love me. I am sure that I was sincere in the affection that I felt for him.

"I will not speak of the crimes which I know now that he has committed. To escape punishment for them he joined his fortunes with those of the Comanches.

"I have secretly been among them to see him once or twice. He incited the present outbreak against the white settlers, and induced me to join him when he came near the settlement of Barstow a few days ago.

"But I would not have remained. I was revolted by what I saw of his cruelty. But it was not easy at first for me to take sides against him.

"See if this does not explain to you all the appearances of treachery which you have observed, even to the attempt to answer his signal—for that had nothing to do with a betrayal of you and your friends."

Buffalo Bill took her hand and pressed it warmly, touching it with his lips with all the chivalry of a prince.

"It explains all, Miss Bertha," he said. "And I should have believed in you just the same if you had not told me a word of this."

The renegade, Merle Morton, was buried at day-break.

Red Plume and Pawnee Bill were able to ride at an easy pace the next day, and the whole party made their way to the nearest settlement.

The death of the renegade leader practically ended the Comanche outbreak, although there was to be enough to do fighting the Indians farther north for many a day.

To Buffalo Bill, Pawnee Bill, and Red Plume we would not wish to say good-by for good and all; and there is no need of doing so.

Even Bertha Hallam deserves a place in our interest, and she may come upon the stage again in a different rôle.

THE END.

"Buffalo Bill's Hard Chase; or, Pawnee Bill and the Saddle Knight," a mighty interesting story, will be contained in the next issue of this weekly. Watch out for the man from Siskiyou! He is a wonder, and you will be thrilled reading about him. This story is full of excitement and stirring incidents. It is No. 590, and will be out August 31st.

THE NEWS OF THE WORLD.

Contributes to the Conscience Fund.

A man in Kittery, Me., who for more than a year has been sending monthly contributions to the federal treasury, sent to President Taft a \$2 bill for deposit in the conscience fund.

"I am sorry to keep troubling you in this manner," he wrote, "but I am anxious that all money shall reach its proper destination, as it is close work saving it."

Better Than Expectations.

The Federal government closed the fiscal year with a surplus of \$32,000,000, according to estimates based upon incomplete returns from the various sources of revenue the country over. This amount far exceeded the most sanguine expectations of Franklin MacVeagh, the secretary of the treasury, who estimated that the surplus would be \$10,250,000.

The surplus at the close of the fiscal year 1911 was \$45,682,000.

The failure of Congress to pass the general deficiency and other appropriation bills, which would have called for large disbursements in the closing days of the fiscal year, helped the government to pile up its surplus.

Another big element in the figures was the corporation tax, which, it is calculated, brought in \$27,000,000, against \$33,000,000 last year.

Customs receipts yielded about \$310,000,000 this fiscal year, against \$314,000,000 last, while internal revenue taxes amounted to \$292,000,000, against \$289,000,000.

The taxation on beer indicated that the American people consumed 63,000,000 barrels in the year. The government realized \$149,000,000 on distilled spirits, \$63,000,000 on beer and \$70,000,000 on tobacco.

A Cab in the Air.

The first aérocab actually constructed has been built in France for the use of Henri Deutsch De La Meurthe. The cab body of the aéroplane, says the Chicago Tribune, will seat six passengers, who will be enabled to view the country above which they are flying from the windows, which are made of mica. The airman's seat is forward of the cab body, against which he leans, and a speaking tube is provided, through which the passengers may communicate with him.

The machine is a Bleriot type monoplane. The propeller, instead of being forward, as in ordinary monoplane practice, is in the rear. The gasoline tank and motor occupy the space usually reserved on monoplanes for the airman and his passengers. The propeller is exceptionally large and powerful, and the motor develops something more than one hundred horse power.

Autographs by Wireless.

Surprising results are being obtained in Italy by means of the new invention of a Turinese youth, Francesco De Bernocchi, called a "wireless iconograph."

His apparatus is far in advance of anything of the kind yet recorded. It transmits, besides ordinary messages, autographs, shorthand, and all sorts of designs and

cryptograms. Exact reproduction follows upon the interaction of synchronic periods of electric waves in correspondence with synchronic periods of helicoidal movements. So simple is the arrangement that the transmitter and receiver of this instrument may be applied with ease to any ordinary wireless telegraphy plant.

General Spingardi, the Italian minister of war, is so much impressed by the enormous advantages of the wireless iconograph for imparting orders and conveying sketches in time of war with the utmost secrecy, that immediate arrangements are being made to secure for Italy exclusive possession of the patent.

French Police to Wear Armor.

The recent series of murderous attacks by motor bandits upon the Paris, France, police has set Monsieur Lepine seeking for some form of protective armor which will render his subordinates bullet proof when face to face with armed criminals.

As a preliminary a special steel breastplate of the kind worn by the British life guards has been manufactured, and this was subjected to severe tests with a view to testing its bullet-stopping value.

The armor, which is intended to be worn under ordinary coat or overcoat, was placed upon a manikin, or lay figure. When a detective, armed with a Browning revolver of small caliber, fired at the steel-protected manikin from a distance of fifteen yards, the bullet failed to penetrate.

A heavier Browning was then tried, of the caliber of the weapon used by one of the notorious bandits in his last fight with the police. The results were less satisfactory from the point of view of the police. Two of the small steel plates forming the cuirass were completely shattered by the heavier bullet, which penetrated the body of the manikin.

Lightness and impenetrability are the essential qualities sought for in the police cuirass, and as the result of further experiments it is believed these qualities will be obtained. It is intended to add headpieces to protect the neck and face.

When a satisfactory model has been found and approved Monsieur Lepine will have a number manufactured. These will be kept at police headquarters, and in future, when a Paris detective or policeman is about to proceed to arrest or search for a dangerous criminal he will first of all buckle on his armor.

Begs Lawyer to Abridge Oratory.

An extraordinary piece of melodrama was enacted in the Camorra trial, at Viterbo, Italy, recently, by the famous Neapolitan lawyer, Lioy, who, defending all the Camorrist prisoners, has himself been constantly attacked as a Camorrist by his colleagues during the trial.

When he rose to resume his fiery harangue, which has already lasted over ten days, one of the caged criminals jumped to his feet, and, addressing the president, exclaimed:

"Your excellency, my fellow prisoners and myself were five years in jail awaiting

trial. This trial has already extended over a couple of years, during which three of our number have languished and died. Every one of us behind these steel bars is wrecked in health, and if the trial lasts much longer none of us will survive to hear the verdict of the jury. Lawyer Lioy has been a true benefactor to us, but we implore, for the love of God, that he abridge his oration. We have all come to the end of our powers of resistance."

Advocate Lioy waxed so furious at this sudden intervention that, hurling execrations at the occupants of the steel cage in old-time prophetic style, he flung off his toga, gathered together his enormous piles of papers, and, despite all the exhortations of the presiding judge, strode contemptuously out of court, ejaculating: "We have finished! We have finished! God help you all!"

Leaves Fortune to Employees.

A German merchant named Hinkel, resident in Moscow, Russia, has bequeathed his fortune, amounting to \$2,500,000, to his employees.

Through the dead man's munificence several dozen clerks, bookkeepers, packers, porters, and doorkeepers suddenly find themselves raised to affluence and partnership in a well-established and lucrative business. All members of the staff who have worked with the testator for at least five years share in the bequest.

Their portions are to be reckoned on the basis of the first annual wage multiplied by the number of years they have been in his service. Those who have worked for the firm less than five years are to receive a joint sum of \$30,000, which is to be divided according to wages and length of service. The testator also left \$50,000 to the poor of Moscow.

The staff have decided to organize the business inherited by them into a joint stock company. They have also decided to erect a handsome tombstone over their benefactor's grave, to build an asylum bearing his name, and to continue contributing to various charities which the merchant supported during his lifetime.

Largest Mammoth Skeleton Mounted.

There has just been mounted for exhibition in the Royal Natural History Museum, Stuttgart, Germany, a specimen which may certainly be regarded as the largest mammoth skeleton ever discovered.

In August, 1910, there were found at Steinheim, in the diluvial deposits of the River Murr, a tributary of the Neckar, in Swabia, a number of fossil bones, indicating the remains of an unusually large mammoth. As an indication of the huge character of the remains, it may be noted that the skull weighs nearly three-quarters of a ton, and the upper foreleg is 4 feet 6 inches long.

After many months of painstaking search, a nearly complete skeleton was obtained and the remains removed under the care of Doctor Eberhard Fraas, a famous naturalist, to Stuttgart, for the purpose of being mounted. The work is now com-

plete, and this colossal framework towers above the visitor's head to a height of more than thirteen feet.

The specimen is remarkable for the abnormal length of the legs, indicating a swift-moving animal, and for a degree of general lightness of frame, indicating activity. The tusks are well shaped, with a slight semicircular curve, but are much less in size than the normal type, being only 7½ feet in length, whereas many of the Siberian and American specimens have tusks double that size. These features lead naturalists to regard it as a late type of the diluvian mammoth at a period when the transition to the smaller and more active elephant species was commencing.

It is so fine a specimen that many naturalists who have seen it have hoped that casts of at least the most important portions of the skeleton should be obtained for the Natural History Museum, at South Kensington.

Danes Wonderful Farmers.

The wonderful story of how the Danes, upon land but poorly suited to grazing and in the face of repeated reverses, have brought their country to a state of agricultural prosperity second only to England among the Old World countries, is told by Doctor Maurice Francis Egan, American minister to Denmark, who is now in Washington, D. C., on leave.

Doctor Egan, together with several other of the American diplomatic officers in Europe, has, under instructions from the state department, made a thorough study of the "farmers' welfare" problem in the European countries, of the part played by the governments in advancing the material prosperity of the farmers, of the success of the farmers themselves in forming co-operative societies for mutual assistance, and of the advantages secured to the whole people of those countries from the promotion of their agricultural resources.

Speaking of his recent lecture tour through the South, Doctor Egan said:

"I was sent by the department of state to expose to dairymen, and farmers especially interested in dairying, the methods by which the Danes have become the most prosperous people agriculturally in Europe. When I say most prosperous, I mean by comparison, and taking into consideration the obstacles they have had to meet and overcome.

"The wealth per capita of Denmark is comparatively next to that of England. This wealth, however, is equalized. There are no very rich people there. Every man is fairly well off, but the poorer he is the more carefully does he conserve his resources. Material well-being is as common in Denmark as education.

"For instance, the only means of living which the Danes have is agriculture. Denmark, like Julius Caesar's Gaul of ancient days, is divided into three parts—butter, bacon, and eggs. Now, the government, being dependent upon the farmers, does everything in its power to increase the number of small farmers, and this it has done by making money as cheap as possible for the farmers. It controls a great series of banks, managed somewhat after the manner of the *crédit foncier*.

"An agricultural laborer in Denmark who has worked on a farm for five years, who is poor, and who has a character so good that two reputable members of the community will certify to it, may obtain from

one of these banks a loan of about \$1,582 in our money. He obtains this solely on his character and ability, and not by any material security he can offer. With this money he may purchase a farm of from 3½ to 12 acres.

"This farm means live and dead stock on the land and the necessary implements for working it. The amount loaned by the bank covers probably nine-tenths of the value of the farm, not of the land, because land in Denmark is never sold merely as land. The farm is judged by the value of its production for, let us say, at least seven years in hard corn, which represents its ability to sustain dairy cattle and hogs. This is an example of the way in which the Danish government encourages the multiplication of small farms.

"The tendency in Denmark was and is to the constant increase of the small farmers, but the small farmer was practically nothing as an individual. To control the British market for fresh butter and the colonial market for canned butter, it was necessary that they have capital; it was necessary that their product be the same in quantity all the year around and always the same in quality. To standardize any product, one must have an enormous quantity of that product and the power of controlling its quality. The Danish farmers, in order to do this, began to form co-operative societies.

"To-day the Danish farmer buys nothing individually. He uses no seeds until they have been tested by experts furnished by the co-operative society. He buys his fertilizers, soya beans, from Manchuria, cotton and meal from the United States, through the co-operative society.

"He never kills his own hogs, though there are 500 hogs to every 1,000 persons in Denmark, but sends them to the co-operative bacon factories, which were founded some time in the eighties, when Germany refused the Danish hog because of an outbreak of swine fever. The Danes instantly founded, with the assistance of the government, large co-operative bacon factories. In order to make dairying possible, the Danes had to regenerate the land exhausted by the lack of scientific treatment."

Laundries Disease Carriers.

Striking danger to public health in all large cities and towns is suggested by the recently published results of experiments made by Professor Poncet, of Paris, with the perspiration of consumptives. He found that the perspiration of almost all tubercular patients contains germs of the disease. Further investigation revealed the startling fact that after the garments of these persons return from the laundry they still contain traces of the disease.

If we stop to think of the variety of soiled clothes which find their way into the wash from all classes of persons, together with our own linen, we must realize the full significance of Professor Poncet's discovery.

Investigation among some of the largest laundries in London, England, has elicited the fact that there is no doubt that infections have been transferred through the handling of soiled clothing. In none of the laundries visited were steps taken to sterilize the great bulk of the clothing brought in for cleansing.

"But," said a well-known bacteriologist in the Lister Institute, "this does not mean that the laundries should be blamed. The

knowledge of the facts is too recent and their meanings to the public too new. It is only now that scientists and physicians are realizing the danger of germ transmission from laundries.

"Take the case of consumption. Great progress has been made in preventing its spread and in showing the public how to take care of itself, and so keep free from the germs; but before Professor Poncet's experiments were made no one properly realized that the danger of infection extended to the simple act of having one's garments washed.

"Undoubtedly," he added, "there is far too great a laxity in the by-laws regulating public laundries. I would suggest the necessity of stringent laws compelling every laundry to use a steel sterilizing plant to purify every garment brought into the premises. Big, cylinderlike boxes into which all the laundry is placed, and steam under high pressure forced through every mesh and thread of the fabric, would effectively kill the hidden germs.

"To make the system effective, it would be imperative that the public laundries should undergo a careful and frequent inspection by officials under the jurisdiction of a department of health. Not only should the methods of disinfecting each garment be superintended, but all persons employed should from time to time be carefully examined to detect possible traces of diseases."

Vaccination May Prevent Cholera.

Important experiments in vaccination against cholera made at the branch of the Pasteur Institute, in Tunis, France, have been reported to the Academy of Medicine, at Paris. Three French scientists, directing the Tunis Institute, having found by numerous tests that vibrios of Asiatic cholera do not multiply in the blood of animals, determined to inoculate men with cultures of the so-called comma bacillus, taking themselves as subjects. Two injections of these microbes into the veins was followed only by very light feverishness. It was afterward repeated many times, with no ill effects.

Persons thus inoculated were considered from examination of the blood to be immune from cholera, and afterward absorbed into the stomach a quantity of bacilli without taking the smallest harm.

Although it is pointed out at the Academy of Medicine that these isolated experiments do not absolutely prove the efficacy of the vaccination method, it is considered they are of the highest value to medicine, and must be followed up without delay.

Book Agent 100 Years Old.

George Clinton Paine, of 89 Clinton Avenue, Newark, who recently celebrated his hundredth birthday, discussed politics and woman suffrage as he sat on the front porch of his home. Mr. Paine is interested in the doings of the democratic convention, at Baltimore. He said that both Champ Clark and Woodrow Wilson were good men to nominate for President, and that he will be glad to vote for either of them if he is still living when election day comes in November.

Mr. Paine cast his first vote for Andrew Jackson, and has voted a straight Democratic ticket ever since except when he cast a ballot for Lincoln. He said that he never regretted that vote. He said that at one time he wasn't in sympathy with

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woman suffrage, but that he is now. Any way, he added, women usually get what they want.

Mr. Paine lives with his daughter at the Clifton Avenue house, but he is not dependent on any one. He is a book agent, and has followed that business for years. He is well known in the Oranges, Montclair, and Newark, and he travels daily from place to place alone.

He was born in Elmira, N. Y., which was then Newton, on July 9, 1812. His father was one of the chief factors in having the name changed from Newton to Elmira. When he was a boy, Mr. Paine said he witnessed battles with Indians in upper New York State. He also said he was a witness to a peace settlement between the Seneca Indians and white men.

Want Sparrow Exterminated.

In a bulletin just issued by the United States biological survey treating on the English sparrow, the winged rat of the air, and advocating his destruction, it is shown that he is a delicious article of diet, and much used for this purpose in the countries where he is a native. The sparrow is much more cleanly than the chicken or the hog, and those who have eaten him, say that he makes a delicious potpie.

In order to get rid of these pests, which are rapidly driving off and exterminating our small insectivorous and song birds, *In the Open* suggests that the sportsmen use them in trap shooting, instead of live pigeons. They can be trapped by the thousands, and the small boy would enter heartily into the matter, provided he was paid a few cents per bird.

Experience has shown us that putting a price on a bird, either for meat or feathers, spells its extermination; so that if a live sparrow is worth 5 cents for trap shooting and one or two for meat, it would not be long before it were something of the past.

Rare Stamps Bring Good Prices.

A small room in Nassau Street, New York, was crowded recently at the sale of two sets of rare stamps by the Philadelphia Stamp Company. These two sets consisted of two blocks of six, one a five-cent stamp bearing the head of Franklin and the other a ten-cent stamp bearing that of Washington, and together representing the first stamps ever issued by the government in this country, in 1847.

The value of this ten-cent Washington lay in its being in a set of six joined together. These early stamps are not perforated, but were originally sold in blocks, and scissors were used for severing them.

The ten-cent Washington has long been the quest of collectors, and it was only by the accidental discovery of this set of six in an old family Bible owned by J. Gibson, of Philadelphia, that they came to light. At the Scott auction rooms it was learned that they were bought for a Philadelphia collector for \$625, while the five-cent Franklins went to J. C. Morgenthau of this city for \$195.

Fortune Spent for Golf Balls Each Year.

The public in general and golf players in particular will probably be interested to hear that golf players all over the country spend \$6,000,000 on golf balls each year.

With the increase in interest in all out-of-door sports, golf has steadily grown more popular, until to-day few communities

in the United States are without at least a nine-hole course. Five years ago it was said there were a quarter of a million golfers in America. To-day there are certainly half a million. It is a bit difficult to estimate the number of balls used, for players vary in times over the course, losses, and in the damage they do the gutta-percha spheres. Then, too, some have old balls remade and soiled balls repainted. It is pretty certain, however, that at least two dozen balls a season are bought by the ordinary golfer. That means 12,000,000 balls, at 50 cents each—the 75-cent ones offsetting the remades—and an investment on the part of the golf players of \$6,000,000.

Motor Cycles Help Mail Carriers.

In no one field of activity are the characteristics of the motor cycle better shown than in the delivery of mail on rural routes. Pleasure and economy are claimed for the motor cycle—and one of these two advantages, at least, has brought the motor cycle into almost universal use among rural mail carriers.

Just one illustration tells "why." Take Henry W. Wallace, R. F. D. carrier No. 4, out of Knox, Ind. His route is 30 miles long, and he makes 100 stops for deliveries. He says he operates his motor cycle for one-fifth of what it would cost him to use a horse and buggy, and that he saves more than one-half of the time. His total repair bill for one year was \$3.68. Economy both in time and money. That's what has won the rural mail carriers, to say nothing of the pleasure gained.

And a motor cycle works right along, just the same, under almost any weather or road conditions. J. J. Reid, of San Francisco, believes he has a fuel "record." He rode 3,500 miles on his motor cycle and spent \$15 for gasoline. Can any one beat it? Less than four-tenths of a cent per mile.

Another time and economy showing has been made by Charles L. Swope and J. Harry Ruth, of Hanover, Pa., in a run of 127 miles. It was made on seven quarts of gasoline, and the last 54 miles were covered in 58 minutes.

Then there is the interesting test made at Meadville, Pa., where a motor cycle carried four passengers up a grade 4,800 feet long, with a rise varying from 3 to 12 per cent. The motor cycle went right up, without difficulty.

Lesson in Popular Government Given by Mayor Gaynor.

New York school children received a lesson in popular government when an address written by Mayor Gaynor was read in all the public schools. In a simple manner which can readily be understood by the school children the mayor gave a definition of "a representative democracy." His letter was written at the request of William H. Maxwell, superintendent of schools.

"If you and the generations which come after you," the mayor tells the school children, "should lack the necessary intelligence and virtue, then our form of government must come to its downfall. I hope our common schools will postpone indefinitely that fatal hour. The downfall of the rulership of the people by themselves means a return to despotism. Under that form of government which we call despotism the ruler does as he likes without regard to the people. He arrests them, he

locks them up, he takes their lives, he takes their property, to suit himself."

Necessity for safeguarding the government's institutions is pointed out by the mayor, and he warns the future guardians of the nation's destiny to beware of officials who "set themselves up above the laws." He declared that "there is no more dangerous man in a free country, in a democracy, than an official who thinks he is better than the laws."

Only Cut Half Customer's Hair, as He Had no Money.

Allen Simmons, a fox hunter, of Winsted, Conn., entered the barber shop of Thomas Warren to get a haircut. After the barber had removed the hair from one side of his head, Simmons noticed a sign which read: "No Trust Here."

"You'll have to wait for this, Thomas," he said to Warren, who asked what he meant.

"I haven't any money to-day," replied Simmons. He was then told to leave the chair, which he did, with half a haircut. Turning sideways and looking at the back of his head in the mirror, he commented:

"One side resembles winter, the other summer." He left the shop, assuring Warren he would return and have the job finished when he had the change.

A London Institution About Which There is No Complaint.

The public is prone to "kick" against some of the regulations of the London county council, at legislative measures like the servants' insurance act and the early closing of shops, but there is a new institution in London about which there never is any complaint, and that is the dogs' home, at Battersea, for which the ratepayers are not taxed, but which is maintained by voluntary subscriptions.

If your dog is lost, go to the dogs' home, and probably you will find him, taken there by a kindly policeman or by the finder, if he has not been stolen. If he is not there, all you need do is to give a description of the dog, and even if he has been stolen he is likely to be returned in time.

Dog thieves are, of course, always on the prowl in London, but they are mostly of the sneak-thief type, and known to the police, though the other day Croydon men contrived to make 38 captures of dogs before they were caught. The dogs were taken to the dogs' home, and almost immediately 18 of them were identified by their owners, and the others were advertised in the newspapers.

Even the poorest-looking mongrels found wandering in the streets of London are taken to the dogs' home and held for a certain time to be claimed. Thereafter they are at the disposal of any one who wants a dog, payment being made of a couple of dollars or more if the buyer cares to help toward the maintenance of the home, which is never overburdened with funds.

It is, of course, rare for a dog of great value to remain there long without being claimed, but there are always a great number of bright, lively fox terriers, which bark and whimper and paw excitedly at the bars of their cages when any stranger appears.

Increase in Exports and Imports.

Increases in both exports and imports are shown by a statement of the foreign commerce of the United States for the month

of May and for the eleven months ending with May, made public to-day by the commerce and labor department's bureau of statistics. Imports for May totalled in value \$1,557,105,573, as compared with \$129,814,100 for the same month a year ago, and the total for the eleven months ending with May was \$1,522,246,824, against \$1,404,418,921.

With exports, totals were \$175,408,058 for May, 1912, against \$153,152,353 for May, 1911, and \$2,066,116,667 for the eleven months ending with May, 1912, against \$1,907,613,462 for the same period last year.

The statement shows a decided falling off in exports of food stuffs, in crude conditions, and food animals, and a corresponding increase in importations of these products.

To Restore the Garden of Eden.

A plan discussed in Denver, Colo., six years ago which provided for the reclamation of the Garden of Eden, the original summer resort of history, is about to become a reality. The work involved in the undertaking will cost about \$30,000,000.

A dispatch from London states that Sir William Willcocks has submitted to the Turkish government a scheme to reclaim the vast tract of land near the delta of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. The land includes what is believed to be the site of the Garden of Eden of Biblical history. The plan follows many months of exploration in Mesopotamia.

Baron Oppenheim, a rich Oriental, who is a close personal friend of Frank Trumbull, former president of the Colorado & Southern, was in Denver six years ago for the purpose of studying Western methods of irrigation.

He was the guest of President Trumbull, and while in Denver told of the scheme to build a railroad from Jerusalem through Babylonia to the ancient city of Babylon, and to establish vast irrigation systems which would reclaim not only that portion of Babylon through which the road went, but to restore the Garden of Eden.

Baron Oppenheim said that remains of ancient irrigating canals still existed in Babylon, and gave evidences of a system which compared favorably with those of Colorado to-day.

He believed that the restoration of these systems, with the addition of modern improvements, would once more make the lands north of the Persian Gulf the garden spot of the world.

He then was working in harmony with Sir William Willcocks.

It is estimated that at a cost of \$30,000,000 the level of the Tigris River could be elevated eight meters through the construction of a system of dikes. The delta of the two rivers, it is said, then would become richer than the valley of the Nile.

Fifty-seven Per Cent of Insane Inmates of N. Y. State Institutions Foreign Born.

The first meeting in New York City of the State insanity commission, of which Doctor Spencer L. Dawes is chairman, and Louis S. Parker counsel, and Charles A. Doolittle assistant counsel, was held on Wards Island recently in the Manhattan State Hospital.

The first witness called by the commission was Doctor William Mabon, director and medical superintendent of the Manhattan State Hospital.

The inquiry confined itself to the propor-

tion of foreign born among the mentally incompetent in State institutions, and Doctor Mabon testified that fully fifty-seven per cent of the inmates of his institution were foreign born, and of that number the citizenship of forty per cent is in doubt. He said there was no evidence available, such as birth certificates, to show what country they belong to. Doctor Mabon said that on September 1, 1907, of 1,888 patients in the hospital at that time, eighty-one per cent were children of foreign-born parents, and one parent was foreign born in the case of seven additional per cent.

At the present time, Doctor Mahon testified, there are eighteen deportable patients in the Manhattan State Hospital, and there are seventy to eighty whose status has not been determined. There are 4,578 patients now.

The commission then turned to the cost of the aliens to the State. Doctor Mabon testified that the average hospital life of the alien was only ten years. The average per capita cost, yearly, to the State is more than \$184. This does not include improvements, interest on property, or allow for the work performed by the inmates. Computing on this basis, the present inmates of this institution during their average life of ten years will cost \$3,243,200. The annual budget for hospitals in the State is about \$9,000,000.

The doctor then introduced a table which he had compiled showing the trend of nationalities. During the past twenty years the English-speaking patients had decreased 25 per cent. The Teutonic races had remained about stationary, while the Latins and Slavs had almost doubled in numbers.

Grit of Young Man Rewarded.

J. H. Patrick, of Columbia, Mo., who graduated from the University of Missouri this year, will soon take a \$1,700 a year position with the Missouri Pacific Railroad through meeting President Bush by accident in Yellowstone Park three years ago. Patrick was almost without money, and was walking through to save expenses. Mr. Bush offered twice, on meeting him, to give him "lifts." Patrick refused, but later came back East with Bush on his special car. Mr. Bush admired Patrick's grit, and promised him a position as soon as he was through school.

The Hardest-luck Baseball Story Ever.

There have been a bunch of hard-luck hurlers beside Christy Mathewson. United fandom thought that when Merkle failed to touch second in that memorial game and cost the Giants a pennant, Mathewson had suffered the utmost in the matter of hard luck, but Andy Ware, the Lookouts' spray-nozzle-tri-digital twirler, suffered recently in the bushes of Alabama, a bit of misfortune to which the ill luck of Matty is compared as the flicker from a firefly's wings unto the rising sun.

Ware held a team 1 and 0 in the last half of the ninth. There were two men down, a man on first, and two strikes and three balls on the batter. In other words, the psychological moment had arrived. Andy shot in his low spitter, but the batter sliced the ball into the air for a Texas leaguer just back of second.

The diamond is not the best in the world, being in a Class Z league, and a number of cans were lying around with the lids pried open. Now, the cans, or, rather, one can,

played an important part, and proved the weapon with which fate inflicted her "most unkindest" blow of all upon poor Andy. The descending sphere went right into an open can and wedged there, the top of the can protruding above the surface of the ball. The second baseman grabbed up the can, but could not dislodge the sphere. Then he chased the runner all around the sacks, holding the can on his back and howling for justice. The ball did not touch the runner, however, and the umpire ruled both men safe. The game was lost.

Collector of the Port of New York Gives Out Figures.

William Loeb, junior, collector of the port of New York, has given out a statement of the commerce of the port in the fiscal year ending June 30, as compared with 1911.

An increase of \$113,583,256 in merchandise imports is shown, and an increase of \$45,761,898 in domestic and foreign exports. The withdrawals from warehouses falling off \$7,147,000, and the receipts from regular customs duties declined \$4,611,803.

The gold and silver imports were \$31,374,762, a decrease of \$5,197,414. Exports of the precious metals increased \$30,802,602. Miscellaneous duties collected were \$2,390,426 less than in the previous twelve months.

Totals for the years follow:

For 1910—Imports of merchandise, \$882,295,655; exports, domestic merchandise, \$750,173,492; exports, foreign merchandise, \$16,078,475; customs collected, \$204,846,262; miscellaneous duties, \$6,566,249; gold and silver imports, \$36,572,176; domestic gold and silver exports, \$49,215,364.

For 1911—Imports of merchandise, \$985,078,911; exports, domestic merchandise, \$804,137,534; exports, foreign merchandise, \$13,876,332; customs collected, \$200,234,459; miscellaneous duties, \$4,175,823; gold and silver imports, \$31,374,762; domestic gold and silver exports, \$77,296,582.

Live Manatee Captured.

A live manatee, six feet seven inches in length, having front feet like a turtle and a head like a cow, weighing nearly 400 pounds, thought to be the only such amphibious animal in captivity, has been caught in Sarasota, Fla., by Vickers Bros., of Atlanta.

The captors were fishing to supply their business when the manatee was caught. According to accounts, the animal is very tame and shows no fear of human beings and will rub up against them in the manner of a friendly dog.

These rare denizens of the water live at the mouths of rivers, and feed on grasses and leaves growing on the bottom.

This is the second one captured in twenty-four years, writes O. J. Vickers, and there are many residents of Sarasota who had not seen one for half a century.

Vickers Bros. claim to have been offered \$2,000 for their prize, but have declined to sell.

Made Up as Roosevelt's Double.

John M. Keyes, of Melrose, Mass., had more fun at the convention in Chicago than anybody else. Made up to look like Colonel Roosevelt, even to the rope on his eyeglasses, John M. paraded around town, went to party councils, theaters, and ball games, and every place he went he had the

crowds guessing. Everybody thought he was "Teddy" and he let them think so till they got wise and quit rubbering. He even had the reporters guessing, and more than one astute scribe thought he was going to secure "a beat" on his fellows when he cornered John M. and asked for the latest. Guess John M. will remember the experience as long as he lives, and many a person who shook hands with him will always think they met "Teddy."

Taking Trip Around the World on Wager.

William Eisinhuth, a young Brooklyn lawyer, has left on a trip around the world, and at the same time his friend and college classmate, Francis Lloyd, will leave San Francisco on a similar trip, but going in the opposite direction.

Eisinhuth is to travel east and Lloyd is to journey west. It has been agreed that each shall travel on foot or by boat when necessary, and such money as is necessary for expenses must be earned while en route. A \$3,000 wager has been made that the trip will be made within a year.

Germany Ranks Second in Industrial Pursuits.

Krupp's famous gun factory in Essen, Germany, now employs 45,000 skilled workmen, as against 12,000 thirty years ago.

Forty years ago, Germany was a purely agricultural country. It ranks second in industrial pursuits, and the population keeps pace with this development. Thirty years ago its population numbered 45,000,000; to-day it is 72,000,000, evidencing a virility that makes for continuous advancement.

Traveling from Flushing to Berlin the railroad passes through an avenue of factories more than three hundred miles long, and all of them working overtime. Farm lands have been converted into city lots and whole villages are being torn down to be replaced by five and six-story city dwellings—not an old house to be seen anywhere—and in passing by the sky line is red with the tile roofs of new dwellings. Individual wealth has grown enormously with it, but they are hard workers, the people of Germany, and the push and energy displayed on every side is most astounding.

In Germany every one speaks one or two languages in addition to his own. A clerk is not admitted into a banking institution, no matter how lowly the character of his work is to be, unless he can at least fluently speak and write one foreign language.

Man of Mystery Dies.

Within a few hundred yards of a beach, where fifty-one years ago two fishermen found him with his legs amputated "Gerome," Nova Scotia's man of mystery, died recently, silent to the end about his identity.

Although he undoubtedly possessed the power of speech, Gerome had not conversed with any one in the half century he had been cared for by Didier Comeau and the latter's sons and daughters. During all of this time Gerome had remained a mystery to the settlers here, most of whom are known as "returned Acadians," being the descendants of the compatriots of Evangeline, who returned to this part of their adopted country after their expulsion by the English in 1755.

Away back in the summer of 1861, ac-

cording to tradition, a ship different from those usually seen off the Nova Scotia coast, put off a small boat which made for the shore and deposited above the tide line an object that several hours later was discovered to be a man. His legs had been freshly amputated, and there was a jug of water and a package of ship's biscuits beside the man, who had suffered greatly from exposure.

Wrapped in blankets and taken to the Comeau house, where, ever since he had been a welcome member of the household, the man was finally revived by a physician. In half a dozen languages the man was asked:

"What is your name?" To this question, in Italian, propounded by the elder Comeau, the man made muttered reply: "Gerome!" Never after that, however, did Gerome utter a word, except on one occasion, when asked where he came from. "Trieste" was the reply made, seemingly in an unguarded moment.

Physicians from all parts of the world who have visited this land of Evangeline in the fifty-one summers that have elapsed since Gerome was found on the beach, have studied the man's case. Most of them have agreed that he might have spoken had he desired to do so; one or two have vouchsafed the opinion that some terrible experience through which Gerome passed frightened him out of his senses and rendered him unable to utter an intelligible word.

Boy Worth \$700,000 Thinks Fortune is \$10,000.

To be the possessor of nearly \$700,000 and understand that his wealth is only \$10,000 is the experience of William Porter Farnsworth, ten years old, son of F. Crawford Farnsworth, of 191 Cooper Avenue, Montclair, N. J.

The boy, by the terms of the will of his maternal grandfather, William K. Porter, of Boston, receives one-third of the \$2,000,000 Porter estate. He heard the will read, but the confusing legal phraseology gave him the idea that he received a much smaller sum than was actually bestowed upon him.

Seeking his paternal grandmother, Mrs. I. D. Farnsworth, who has reared him since the death of his mother, the boy said: "Grandma, I've \$10,000 and I'm going to spend it on you."

The boy's relatives have not disabused his mind of the idea that his fortune is comparatively small, so he is not bothering much about the inheritance, which has made him envied by boys in the Mount Hebron school, where he is a pupil.

The boy is a good horseman. He rode a pony in the equestrian quadrille of the Commonwealth Circus in Montclair.

Dogs the Guests of Honor at this Lunch.

Mrs. Arthur L. Holland gave a luncheon recently at the Hotel Vanderbilt, in New York City, in honor of her prize-winning royal Pekingese dog, Vi Sin. Seven of Mrs. Holland's friends were present, each bringing a blue-blooded Pekingese dog.

Mentioning the guests who sat about the teakwood table, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, which was drawn up under the frowning golden padoga on the wall screen, one proceeds in the order about the table thus:

Toto, Mrs. William Shannon; Madame

Wu, Mrs. William E. Belding; Wu Ting Fang, Mrs. A. Radcliffe Dugmore; Pin Kee, Mrs. Carl E. Ackley; Ti Tu, Mrs. Edward Woodward; Ehr Sin, Miss Hilda Wood; Fah Sin, Miss Doonja De Mitzkiewicz Holland, who is a daughter by Mrs. Holland's former marriage to a Russian nobleman.

James J. Hill Retires.

With the retirement recently of James J. Hill from his position as chairman of the Great Northern Railroad, Mr. Hill completed thirty-three years of active service in the Northwest, beginning with his purchase of an interest in the St. Paul & Pacific, of which he was made general manager, to the time of his resignation from the office which he has held for five years, since he resigned the presidency of the Great Northern road.

James J. Hill rose from a job as a day laborer to the presidency of the Great Northern Railroad, one of the greatest of transcontinental systems. He was cut out for the pulpit, dreamed in his youth of war and literature, and when a man turned his tremendous energies to the massing of money.

He was born in Guelph, Ont., in 1838, and in 1855 broke away from the family home, going to St. Paul. He did not have many dollars in his pocket on arrival there, but he had an iron will, a constitution of the same material, education and perseverance. Although he started at the bottom of the ladder of manual labor it was not long before his bosses realized his mentality was as strong as his body, and they gave him work accordingly. He was appointed local agent of the Northwestern Packet Company soon after reaching St. Paul, and remained with that company until 1867.

"Jim" Hill had accumulated a fortune of \$100,000 in a warehouse venture by 1873, and then his first opportunity came. The St. Paul & Pacific Railroad defaulted in payment of interest on its bonds. There was \$33,000,000 in principal and interest outstanding. How to get control of this railroad with only \$100,000 was a problem, but young Hill went at it with all the diplomacy in his power, consulting the great financiers of the day and gradually convincing them that with a little more capital he could put the wobbling railroad on its feet.

The rehabilitated road was named the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba, and Mr. Hill became general manager of the system, and when it was merged with the Great Northern he became president of the consolidated corporation. Mr. Hill was only forty-five years old when he became head of the Great Northern.

From that time on he devoted himself to the task of improving this railroad property and competing with the other heads of the great systems which threatened to take business from him unless he kept pace with him. He advanced with the whole railroad world step by step, and often was several steps in the lead.

Mr. Hill early in his career realized the commercial advantage of the Great Lakes, and now the great freight-carrying vessels that ply from shore to shore of Michigan are under the control of the company whose destinies he directed.

From the very outset of his career Mr. Hill was convinced that some day he would be great, but that conviction never once

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